

CONTRARY VOICES: HEINE, HÖLDERLIN, AND GOETHE
IN THE MUSIC OF HANNS EISLER

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ABSTRACT

Heidi Hart: *Contrary Voices: Heine, Hölderlin, and Goethe in the Music of Hanns Eisler*
(Under the direction of Thomas Pfau)

Contrary Voices examines composer Hanns Eisler's settings of nineteenth-century poetry under changing political pressures from 1925 to 1962. The poets' ideologically fraught reception histories, both under Nazism and in East Germany, led Eisler to intervene in this reception and voice dissent by radically fragmenting the texts. His musical settings both absorb and disturb the charisma of nineteenth-century sound materials, through formal parody, dissonance, and interruption. Eisler's montage-like work foregrounds the difficult position of a modernist artist speaking both to and against political demands placed on art. Often the very charisma the composer seeks to expose for its power to sway the body politic exerts a force of its own. At the same time, his text-settings resist ideological rigidity in their polyphonic play. A dialogic approach to musical adaptation shows that, as Eisler seeks to resignify Heine's problematic status in the Weimar Republic, Hölderlin's appropriation under Nazism, and Goethe's status as a nationalist symbol in the nascent German Democratic Republic, his music invests these poetic voices with surprising fragility and multivalence. It also destabilizes received gender tropes, in the masculine vulnerability of Eisler's Heine choruses from 1925 and in the androgynous voices of his 1940s Hölderlin exile songs and later Goethe settings. Cross-reading the texts after hearing such musical treatment illuminates faultlines and complexities less obvious in text-only analysis. Ultimately Eisler's music translates canonical material into a form as paradoxically faithful as it is violently fragmented.

To my parents, John, and our children, with gratitude.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xi
INTRODUCTION: POLITICS, PARODY, AND MUSICAL DISSENT	1
General introduction	1
Reading words and music	5
Hanns Eisler's life and work	8
Literature review and methodology	19
Key terms	28
Outline of chapters	34
CHAPTER 1: HEINE AT THE BREAKING POINT: THREE MEN'S CHORUSES.....	39
Introduction	39
A postwar war zone	41
The Männerchor on right and left	45
A modernist experiment	50
Heine's articulate dissent	55
"Tendenz"	61
To the guillotine and into the fire	79
Cross-reading and conclusion	92
CHAPTER 2: MUSIC TO BREAK THE CURSE: HÖLDERLIN IN HOLLYWOOD.....	98
Introduction	98

Estranging beauty	102
The contested poet	107
Parataxis/Fragmentation	121
Ghost songs	145
Cross-reading and conclusion	176
CHAPTER 3: MAGIC WORDS? GOETHE IN EAST BERLIN.....	183
Introduction	183
Exile songs	187
Music of ruin and renewal	193
Goethe, east and west	198
A multivalent <i>Rhapsodie</i>	203
Critical play with Goethe and Bach	222
<i>Faustus</i> damned	238
Cross-reading and conclusion	249
CHAPTER 4: HÖLDERLIN BETWEEN THE LINES: EISLER'S <i>ERNSTE GESÄNGE</i>	254
Introduction	254
Hölderlin's remnants	257
Threshold music	274
Cross-reading and conclusion	289
CONCLUSION	294
REFERENCES.....	301

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1- <i>Verbrüderung</i> by Käthe Kollwitz	54
Figure 1.2 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Tendenz"	70
Figure 1.3 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Tendenz"	72
Figure 1.4 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Tendenz"	73
Figure 1.5 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Tendenz"	76
Figure 1.6 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Tendenz"	77
Figure 1.7 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Utopie"	85
Figure 1.8 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Utopie"	86
Figure 1.9 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Demokratie"	91
Figure 2.1 - Excerpt from Eisler's "An die Hoffnung"	151
Figure 2.2 - Excerpt from Eisler's "An die Hoffnung"	153
Figure 2.3 - Excerpt from Eisler's "An die Hoffnung"	155
Figure 2.4 - Excerpt from Eisler's "An die Hoffnung"	155
Figure 2.5 - Excerpt from Schumann's "Und wüßten's die Blumen, die kleinen"	155
Figure 2.6 - Excerpt from Eisler's "An die Hoffnung"	156
Figure 2.7 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Andenken"	158
Figure 2.8 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Andenken"	158
Figure 2.9 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Andenken"	159
Figure 2.10 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Elegie 1943"	161
Figure 2.11 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Elegie 1943"	162
Figure 2.12 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Elegie 1943"	162
Figure 2.13 - Excerpt from Eisler's "Die Heimat"	164

Figure 2.14 - Excerpt from Eisler’s “Die Heimat”	165
Figure 2.15 - Excerpt from Eisler’s “An eine Stadt”	167
Figure 2.16a - Excerpt from Eisler’s “An eine Stadt”	168
Figure 2.16b - Excerpt from Schubert’s “Mignons Lied”	168
Figure 2.17 - Excerpt from Eisler’s “An eine Stadt”	169
Figure 2.18 - Excerpt from Eisler’s “Erinnerung”	171
Figure 2.19 - Excerpt from Eisler’s “Erinnerung”	172
Figure 2.20 - Excerpt from Eisler’s “Erinnerung”	173
Figure 3.1 - Excerpt from Eisler’s “Glückliche Fahrt”	192
Figure 3.2 - Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Goethe-Rhapsodie</i>	213
Figure 3.3 - Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Goethe-Rhapsodie</i>	214
Figure 3.4 - Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Goethe-Rhapsodie</i>	216
Figure 3.5 - Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Goethe-Rhapsodie</i>	218
Figure 3.6 - Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Das Vorbild</i>	226
Figure 3.7 - Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Das Vorbild</i>	232
Figure 3.8 - Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Das Vorbild</i>	233
Figure 3.9 - Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Das Vorbild</i>	237
Figure 4.1- Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Ernste Gesänge</i>	277
Figure 4.2- Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Ernste Gesänge</i>	279
Figure 4.3- Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Ernste Gesänge</i>	281
Figure 4.4 - Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Ernste Gesänge</i>	283
Figure 4.5- Excerpt from Eisler’s <i>Ernste Gesänge</i>	284
Figures 4.6a and 4.6b - Excerpts from Eisler’s <i>Ernste Gesänge</i>	284

Figure 4.7 - Excerpt from Eisler's <i>Ernste Gesänge</i>	285
Figure 4.8- Excerpt from Eisler's <i>Ernste Gesänge</i>	287

INTRODUCTION

POLITICS, PARODY, AND MUSICAL DISSENT

General introduction

After hearing his friend Hanns Eisler's musical settings of Hölderlin during their shared Nazi-era exile in California, Bertolt Brecht exclaimed that the composer had freed the poet from plaster ("vom Gips ... befreit").¹ Late in his life, recalling these settings of nineteenth-century poetry, Eisler described his approach with a very different metaphor, if similar in its evocation of brittleness: "Die Aufgabe der Musik ist es, solche poetische Gedanken und Bilder wie eine Fliege im Bernstein zu bewahren – sonst sind sie weg"² ["Music's task is to preserve such poetic thoughts and images like a fly in amber – or else they are gone"]. Eisler's breaking and re-functioning of older aesthetic material can be said to meet the texts in a paradox of freedom and fidelity. The difficult position of a modernist artist committed to Socialist values becomes apparent in Eisler's critical approach to composition, which draws on lyric charisma in order to expose its power and, at the same time, creates a sense of longing for the very "schöne Klang"³ ["beautiful sound"] that underwent political compromise in the first half of the twentieth century. Eisler's text-setting process, which he saw as dialectical in both a historical and aesthetic sense,

¹ Hans Bunge, *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard,

² *Ibid.* 219. Translations mine unless otherwise noted.

³ See Ernst Bloch and Hanns Eisler, "Die Kunst zu Erben," in Hans-Jürgen Schmitt, ed., *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 260. This text addresses the formalism debates of the late 1930s, in which Georg Lukács and Bloch differed most vehemently on the question of Expressionism and its potential links to fascism.

also tends toward polyphonic formal play. His contrary and multiple voices are no less activist for their formal complexity and even beauty, however; in their centrifugal movement, they protest authoritarian rigidity and one-sided readings of inherited cultural material.

At a time when Hanns Eisler scholarship is enjoying a post-Cold War renaissance, alongside broader concerns about the role of “canonical” literature in the contemporary humanities, this study of textual afterlives in high-stakes political context makes a case for continued, creative readings of nineteenth-century poetry as well as for intermedial analysis of Eisler’s vocal music. A new German edition of his collected works has led to numerous recent studies of his influences and musical responses to critical moments in the twentieth century. In the U.S., analyses of Eisler’s Russian influences and his place in East German approaches to mourning point to a growing transatlantic interest in his work. His approach to nineteenth-century texts has received less attention, with one landmark study appearing roughly every decade since Eisler’s death. Since Albrecht Betz’s late 1970s studies of the composer’s Heine and Hölderlin settings appeared, Claudia Albert’s 1997 study of Eisler’s Hölderlin songs and Arnold Pistiak’s 2013 boxed set of handbooks on Eisler’s text-settings (with an emphasis on Heine and Goethe) are two of the few projects that engage directly and intermedially with Eisler’s “canonical” songs. This study builds on and critically engages Albert’s and Pistiak’s work, as it seeks to contribute to German literary scholarship from a musicological and adaptation-studies perspective. For this reason, my project does not focus solely on Eisler as a composer but rather investigates the poetry of Heinrich Heine, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as filtered, fragmented, and reclaimed through his music, under changing political pressures from 1925 to 1962.

Eisler's musical adaptations intervene in the ideologically fraught reception of the poets' works, particularly under Nazism and in the early years of the German Democratic Republic. In each case Eisler radically fragments the poems, which his music re-shapes through parody, dissonance, irruption, and musical tropes for lament. Drawing on his early training under Arnold Schoenberg, and practicing a dialectical approach to composition in which contrary elements collide or merge into a new form, Eisler unsettles familiar models of lyricism in order to break their politically dangerous spell. This study incorporates but also looks beyond musical dialectics (a term explored more fully later in this Introduction) to show how elements of fragility and polyphony voiced in Eisler's music expose less obvious qualities of brittleness and multivalence in his source texts. This music presses against received notions of gender (the "cool conduct" of Weimar-era masculinity,⁴ for example) to expose vocal vulnerability as well. With its shifting modes of formal parody and dissonance, Eisler's text-settings both absorb and disturb the sonic charisma often usurped for univocal ideology, whether on the right or on the left. Like the montage technique in Sergei Eisenstein's films, T.S. Eliot's use of parody, and even Rilke's image-fragmentation in the *Duino Elegien*, the modernist aspect of Eisler's music plays with and estranges familiar materials. His dismantling and adapting of older texts with ideologically charged reception is similar to Paul Celan's breaking of the German language in his post-Shoah poetry, which also plays both with and against traditional folksong meters.

Eisler's own reception has been as complicated since his death in 1962 as it was in his lifetime, as an artist exiled under Nazism, deported from the U.S. under McCarthyism, and heavily criticized by East German cultural authorities, despite his consistent support of Socialist

⁴ See Helmut Lethen, *Cool conduct: the culture of distance in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

values. Respected enough in the GDR to have Berlin's Hochschule für Musik named after him in 1964, and the subject of surprisingly nuanced Marxist-musicological studies, Eisler was also controversial enough to have a continuing, posthumous Stasi file, mostly a collection of West German concert reviews, into the early 1980s. He received far less attention in Anglo-American musicology until the past ten years. When the popular singer Sting's sly adaptation of Eisler's song "An den kleinen Radioapparat" ["To the Little Radio"] appeared as "The Secret Marriage" in 1987, very few listeners had ever heard of the composer. Academic work on Eisler's music to that point had focused mainly on his collaborations with Bertolt Brecht; since then, scholars writing on his nineteenth-century text-settings, in particular Albert and Pistiak as noted above, have emphasized this music's revolutionary or hopeful character. This project gives more focus to the surprising fragility and multivalence that emerges in work by a composer known for his percussive, forward-moving music. Drawing on recent developments in adaptation studies, a field usually applied in novel-to-film studies but gaining more breadth, my two-way readings of text and music show how Eisler's interventionist adaptations reveal less obvious features of his source material, from melancholy to polyphonic simultaneity. Combining literary and musicological analysis within the larger framework of dialogic adaptation, *Contrary Voices* draws on older East German models of musical dialectics, on Bakhtin's poetics of textual polyphony applied in reverse to music, and on studies of parody and *Stimmung* (variously translated as "mood," "voicing," or "attunement"), as modes of critical expression.

This Introduction provides a biographical sketch of Hanns Eisler, includes a review of scholarship on his text-settings and a description of my own methodology, defines several key terms operating throughout the dissertation, and concludes with an outline of its four chapters. Each chapter provides background on the poets whose texts Eisler chose for musical setting, as

well as on their nineteenth- and twentieth-century reception. Close readings of the texts, both in their source and adapted forms, precede musical analysis; a final cross-reading at the end of each chapter reveals aspects of the poems less obvious without Eisler's music in mind. At the outset of this Introduction, a brief framing of *Contrary Voices* within the field of word and music studies aids in tracking its movement between disciplines. In line with several recent monographs that cross these boundaries, for example Axel Englund's 2012 *Still Songs: Music In and Around the Poetry of Paul Celan*, my project includes both textual and musicological close readings that illuminate each other reciprocally. Though some technical vocabulary helps to illustrate my arguments in each chapter, I include paraphrases and visual examples to help convey these points to readers with or without musical background.

Reading words and music

The area of word and music studies has developed over the past twenty years within the larger field of intermediality, or the study of intersecting media, whether in the obvious sense of novel-film relations, or in the less noticeable but equally complex sense of intermedial resonances within a work that *appears* to function in only one medium.⁵ The word and music field has also developed out of the "new musicology" of the 1980s, when Lawrence Kramer, Rose Rosengard Subotnik, and others departed from the isolationist analysis, akin to New Criticism in literature, dominant to that point in U.S. musicology and opened the field, against significant resistance at first, to a larger cultural context.⁶ Foundational handbooks in word and

⁵ Foundational texts on intermediality include the following: Jürgen E. Müller, *Intermedialität: Formen moderner kulturellen Kommunikation* (Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 1996); Irina Rajewsky, *Intermedialität* (Tübingen: Francke, 2002); Lars Elleström, ed., *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); and Jørgen Bruhn's forthcoming introductory book that focuses on "heteromedial" elements of textual works.

⁶ See, for example, Lawrence Kramer, *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and *Music as Cultural Practice: 1800-1900* (University of

music studies, in addition to Kramer's *Music and Poetry* from the field's early years, include Nicholas Cook's 1998 *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, which relates classical music to visual media and raises questions about music and metaphor; Werner Wolf's 1999 *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality*, which catalogues formal imitations of music in fiction; and Siglind Bruhn's 2000 *Musical Ekphrasis: Composers Responding to Poetry and Painting*, in addition to her more recent *Sonic Transformations of Literary Texts: From Program Music to Musical Ekphrasis* (2008). Several studies of Schumann and Heine from the late 1990s and early 2000s provide particularly nuanced examples of intermedial analysis of poetry and music.⁷ In the related field of what is sometimes called musical semiotics, Lawrence Kramer's now-classic text *Musical Meaning* (2002) takes a more hermeneutic approach to thorny questions of what and *how* music "means"; other widely read sources include Jean-Jacques Nattiez's *Music and Discourse* (1990) and Kofi Agawu's more recent and similarly titled *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (2008). Though a detailed treatment of music and meaning is beyond this project's scope, I do take into account material-associative "traces"⁸ that carry semiotic content, however culturally contingent, in music, and the ways in which Hanns Eisler calls up and questions such traces in his settings of nineteenth-century poetry.

California Press, 1990); and Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991) and *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995). Subotnik's introduction of Theodor Adorno's critical-theory approach to music, long familiar in Europe, into the U.S. academy in the early 1990s also aroused controversy, though Adorno is now generally considered required reading for American students of musicology.

⁷ See, for example, Beate Julia Perrey, *Schumann's Dichterliebe and Early Romantic Poetics: The Fragmentation of Desire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁸ See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 15, and Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations*, 124-125.

Political context has become a more pressing concern in music history over the past twenty years, both in the “personal is political” application of feminism and queer theory to musicology and in post-Cold War studies of music and German nationalism, the role of the symphony orchestra in the Nazi era, music in the Holocaust, the pressures on Soviet composers, and classical music in the German Democratic Republic. In word and music studies, several recent conferences on music and ideology and on music and narrative have included numerous papers on politically charged textual-musical works. While the adhesiveness of music and politics may seem obvious in Germany, with its fraught history of musical appropriation and intervention, it is drawing more attention in the U.S., with its own history of such entanglements, from coded Negro spirituals and Vietnam War protest songs to music torture in Iraq. The roles of performer and listener have also gained critical ground in recent musicology as well as in word and music studies, often within political context. At a 2015 International Society for Intermediality Studies conference in Utrecht, discussions of performance and participation did significant work to break down perceived barriers between the two. This project draws on my own participation in Eisler’s music to better understand its demands on the voice and its present-time reception, not only as a twentieth-century artifact but also as a response to current tensions around immigration and race in Germany and the U.S.

The three poets under consideration here have been the subjects of less extensive word-and-music research than might be expected. Nuanced readings of Schumann’s song cycles that also take into account their textual richness, such as Beate Julia Perrey’s 2002 *Schumann’s Dichterliebe and Early Romantic Poetics*, are not difficult to find, but more explicitly cross-reading approaches, such as that of Susan Youens in her 2007 *Heinrich Heine and the Lied*, are rare. Several recent Goethe studies either focus on references to music within his texts or take a

diminished view of their musical settings; while in adaptation studies, “fidelity” rhetoric is often suspect, and Robert Hatten’s 2008 article “A Surfeit of Musics: What Goethe’s Lyrics Concede When Set to Schubert’s Music,” assumes a loss of poetic force in the text-setting process. Links between Hölderlin’s poetry and music have not received extensive scrutiny, beyond several multi-poet surveys and studies of Brahms’ choral setting of Hölderlin’s “Schicksalslied” from *Hyperion*. This project combines close readings of all three poets’ texts, their fragmented versions in Eisler’s compositional process, and their re-voicing in his music. Background on the lives and work of Heine, Hölderlin, and Goethe is beyond this Introduction’s scope but is provided in each chapter. Because Hanns Eisler is not so familiar a figure in German literary studies, I outline his biography and compositional practice below.

Hanns Eisler’s life and work

Best known as the composer of the 1929 “Solidaritätslied” [“Solidarity Song”] and the 1949 East German national hymn, “Auferstanden aus Ruinen” [“Risen from the Ruins”], Hanns Eisler was a frequent collaborator with Brecht, as committed as the poet and playwright was to politically responsible art. A tension between aesthetic pleasure and the critical puncturing of that pleasure, through the “Verfremdungseffekt” or “estrangement effect,” is well known in both men’s work, particularly in Brecht’s collaborations with Kurt Weill, whose catchy melodies are meant to draw attention to their very status as “song.” Eisler’s ballads written with Brecht work in a similar way, though in both cases, the music’s tunefulness often wins out over efforts to interrupt or defamiliarize it.

Eisler’s family background – as the son of a Jewish philosopher-musician father and working-class German mother – sheds light on another tension in his music, between formal sophistication and practical activism. Born in Vienna in 1898, Eisler grew up in Leipzig, where

he often heard the Lieder of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf at the family piano;⁹ the texture and “Stimmung,” or mood, of this music echoes throughout his 1940s settings of Hölderlin. Eisler’s experience as an enlisted and seriously wounded World War I soldier in Hungary deeply affected his later work as well; drafts of anti-war musical grotesquerie written in his late teens foreshadow his 1925 Heine settings for men’s chorus and Brechtian peace ballads of the 1930s and 40s. When he returned to Vienna, Eisler began studying with Arnold Schoenberg, who provided rigorous background in Bach’s counterpoint and Brahms’ harmony in addition to his own compositional approach, ranging from free atonality to the stricter serialist model in which each pitch in a specified row can only be played once before being heard again. In the early 1920s Eisler broke from his teacher, frustrated with the hermetic tendency of Schoenberg’s composition and longing for more a politically engaged approach.

In 1925 Eisler moved to Berlin, in a climate of simmering postwar trauma and political street fights. This was also a time of fragile economic optimism, amid Chancellor Gustav Stresemann’s efforts to support social programs through taxation and ease hyperinflation while relying on foreign loans. With the lifting of censorship, the Weimar “golden era” encouraged a new climate of musical experimentation. As Bryan Gilliam has noted,

Composers, performers and audiences sought to ignore – even negate – their recent past ... by affirming modern technology (electronic and mechanical music, sound recordings, radio, and film), exploring music of a more remote past (principally Baroque music), and celebrating popular music (particularly jazz).¹⁰

Hanns Eisler would explore all three of these fields, in his film scores, secular oratorio collaborations with Brecht, and parodic uses of jazz. During the Weimar era, tensions between

⁹ Friederike Wißmann, *Hanns Eisler: Komponist. Weltbürger. Revolutionär* (Munich: Edition Elke Heidenreich, C. Bertelsmann, 2012), 35.

¹⁰ Bryan Gilliam, ed., *Music and performance during the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xi.

“old” and “new” music were further complicated by competing strains in 1920s composition: the Second Viennese School, associated with Schoenbergian atonality and exclusivity, and Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity), espoused by Paul Hindemith, who also collaborated on Lehrstücke or “teaching pieces” with Brecht. Both strains, located in Eisler’s view on the “left wing of bourgeois music,”¹¹ found support in Berlin new-music societies such as the Musikgesellschaft and the Melos Gemeinschaft, founded in 1919 and 1920, respectively. Formal invention was encouraged in new-music festivals in Donaueschingen and Baden-Baden. Eisler contributed his *Sechs Lieder*, Op. 2 to a 1925 festival focused on the revival and reinterpretation of older musical forms.

Attracted to formal experimentation *and* political function, Eisler was well aware of the ideological tension between them. He had harsh words for the “Spielfreude” [“play-pleasure”] and occasional-music aspects of Hindemithian Gebrauchsmusik, which he perceived more as entertainment than as music for actual use. Though, in another strain of musical modernism, Richard Strauss was taking an idiosyncratically critical stance toward Wagnerian metaphysics,¹² Eisler distrusted his music for its chromatic lushness and affective extremes. In 1918 Max Weber had “demanded a new *Sachlichkeit*” in reaction against what he saw as the ““spiritual narcotic”” of Expressionism¹³ – anticipating Eisler’s own critique of musical intoxication.¹⁴ On the other

¹¹ Manfred Grabs, ed., *Hanns Eisler: A Rebel in Music*, trans. Marjorie Meyer (London: Kahn & Averill, 1999), 49.

¹² Thanks to Bryan Gilliam for this observation, Duke University, 12 September 2014.

¹³ See Max Weber, quoted in “Ein Jahrhundert *Frankfurter Zeitung*,” *Die Gegenwart*, XI (October 29, 1956), 15, and Gay, 120.

¹⁴ See Hanns Eisler, “Fortschritte in der Arbeitermusikbewegung,” *Gesammelte Schriften 1921-1935*, in *Hanns Eisler Gesamtausgabe*, Series IX, Schriften, Vol. 1.1, ed. Tobias Faßhauer and Günter Mayer (Wiesbaden and Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2007), 109.

side of this “bourgeois left wing,” Eisler had broken with Schoenberg precisely because of the élitist, hermetic atmosphere surrounding his teacher’s innovations, which seemed to him politically out of touch.¹⁵ In his own work, he pressed for an activist “Tendenzmusik” or “angewandte Musik” (“applied music”)¹⁶ that would arouse choral singers and listeners to participation in the class struggle. At the same time, Eisler hoped for a discovery of “soul and a new lyricism” that he believed had been lost in new music’s formal indecisiveness.¹⁷ Eisler saw Stravinsky’s music as linked with Hindemith’s in its stylistic wandering, and with Schoenberg’s in its need to be “refrigerated” so as not to “stir the inner emotions of the listeners.”¹⁸ To add to this musical-ideological tangle, it was not the “cold” but the kinetically absorbing aspect of Stravinsky’s music that would later raise Adorno’s ire in his Schoenberg vs. Stravinsky polemic, the 1949 *Philosophie der neuen Musik*. Throughout his career, Eisler played these opposites against each other, enjoying formal innovation and material charisma in his creative process – and sometimes taking heavy criticism for this – while exposing music’s potential to encourage mindless narcosis, bourgeois complacency, and commercial or political exploitation. That his music’s own material seems to slip from his control at times, as in the lyrical buildup that occurs in his 1940s Hölderlin settings, reveals the precarious project of a modernist composer with Socialist convictions and a didactic bent.

¹⁵ Betz, 48. Thomas Pfau has noted the political agenda inherent in Schoenberg’s aesthetic project, to begin a new musical system from the ground up, a utopian endeavor Thomas Mann’s novel *Doktor Faustus* explores at length.

¹⁶ Thomas Phelps notes that Eisler used the term “angewandte Musik,” with which he has become strongly associated, in only three of his writings, between 1949 and 1951. See Thomas Phelps, “‘Eine neue Nützlichkeit’: Der ‘Sector der angewandten Musik’ bei Hanns Eisler,” in Ulrich Tadday, ed., *Hanns Eisler: Angewandte Musik*, Musik-Konzepte Sonderband (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2012), 5-27.

¹⁷ Grabs, 49-52.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 49.

Few composers were exempt from class-based taint in the formalism debates of the first half of the twentieth century. What Adorno and Horkheimer later marked as the danger of “contemplation” and “enchantment” in art – the threat of the sirens’ song, as treated in the 1939-1944 *Dialektik der Aufklärung* – already bore bourgeois-capitalist associations in the 1920s, “point[ing] to what Lukács terms a predominant type of *Lebensführung* or way of life that has become ‘second nature’ in the increasingly commodified relations of modern bourgeois society.”¹⁹ Günter Mayer has described Eisler’s difficult-to-pin-down position, at variance with Adorno’s, this way:

He sees bourgeois music in all its forms as either directly or indirectly stabilizing the existing balance of power ... Eisler’s critical analysis of the traditional concert and entertainment industry monopoly is, at the same time, constructive. He looks for possibilities ... in social upheavals, in technically transmitted mass-communication but also in the ‘*Materialrevolution*.’²⁰

In a 1931 essay, Eisler describes the “material revolution” working not as an independent process but as the alteration of musical materials under socio-political pressure:

[D]ie Geschichte lehrt uns, daß jeder neue Musikstil nicht aus einem ästhetischen neuen Standpunkt entsteht, also keine Materialrevolution darstellt, sondern die Änderung des Materials zwangsläufig bedingt wird durch eine historisch notwendige Änderung der Funktion der Musik in der Gesellschaft überhaupt.²¹

[History teaches us that every new musical style does not arise from a new aesthetic standpoint, that is, it does not represent a material revolution, but rather the alteration of materials becomes inevitably contingent through a historically necessary change in music’s social function generally.]

¹⁹ David C. Durst, *Weimar Modernism: Philosophy, Politics, and Culture in Germany 1918-1933* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 33-34.

²⁰ Günter Mayer, “Eisler and Adorno,” trans. Fiona Elliott (first published by the Institut für Wertungsforschung at the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Graz, Vol 12, 1977), in Blake, 141-142.

²¹ Hanns Eisler, “Die Erbauer einer neuen Musikkultur,” in *Materialien zu einer Dialektik von Musik*, ed. Manfred Grabs (Leipzig: Reclam, 1976), 74.

Eisler's Heine choruses, with their activist stance and formal sophistication, are actually quite close to Marx and Engels' view that both bourgeoisie and proletariat play roles in social transformation. That said, the music's extremes of volume and range push even bourgeois "art music" to a painful limit of difficulty.

Eisler learned from this project that in order to attract workers' choruses that could actually sing his music, he needed to structure his music more predictably. After a period of success writing and directing fairly straightforward *Kampflieder* for workers' choruses in late 1920s Berlin,²² formalist-activist tension gained intensity in Eisler's exile music of the 1930s and 40s. By this time Eisler had met and begun collaborating with Brecht. After their 1930 *Lehrstück Die Maßnahme* aroused controversy for its modeling of violent sacrifice (of the "weakest link" among radical agitators in China), the writer and composer's 1929/30 film *Kuhle Wampe* (also the original context for the "Solidaritätslied") was banned by National Socialist censors in 1933. Eisler and Brecht took separate and sometimes intersecting paths into exile, from Switzerland to the Soviet Union to Scandinavia and the U.S. While collaborating in Denmark with Brecht at the war's outset, Eisler composed two versions of Brecht's elegy-triptych "An die Nachgeborenen" ["To Those Born After"]: one scored minimalistically for speechlike voice and accordion, meant for the singing actor Ernst Busch, and the other set as a Schoenbergian journey through dissonance and rhythmic instability, in which trace elements of "classical" form surface and dissolve, thus protected from too easy recognition and absorption according to right-wing

²² For recent scholarship on Eisler's workers' choruses that followed his Heine settings of 1925, see Margaret R. Jackson, *Workers, Unite! The Political Songs of Hanns Eisler, 1926-1932*, doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 2003; and Yana Alexandrovna Lowry, *From Massenlieder to Massovaia Pesnia: Musical Exchanges between Communists and Socialists of Weimar Germany and the Early Soviet Union*, doctoral dissertation, Duke University Department of Music, 2014.

investment in “tradition.”²³ During this time Eisler also worked on his anti-fascist *Deutsche Symphonie*, which accompanied him from 1935 to 1940 as he passed through the U.S., England, France, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Scandinavia. Originally titled the “Konzentrationslagersymphonie”²⁴ or “Concentration Camp Symphony,” this complex work begins with the opening of Brecht’s poem “O Deutschland, bleiche Mutter” [“O Germany, pale mother”] and combines Kampfmusik tropes, traditional markers of lament, and citations of tunes such as the “Internationale,” a common motif in Eisler’s work. In this project he faced a challenge that would follow him throughout his career: “ich wollte Trauer ohne Sentimentalität und Kampf ohne Militärmusik darstellen”²⁵ [“I wanted to depict sorrow without sentimentality and struggle without military music”].

In the German and Jewish exile community in Los Angeles, Eisler worked on film scores for a living and collaborated with Theodor Adorno on the 1949 book *Composing for the Films*, part how-to manual and part critique of musical commodification in Hollywood. During the 1940s Eisler continued to set texts by Brecht in his *Hollywooder Liederbuch* or *Hollywood Songbook*. Well-known miniatures such as “An den kleinen Radioapparat” (“To the Little Radio”) evoke a pessimistic response to news from the poet and composer’s German homeland – and, at the same time, a refusal to turn away. In order to confront the aesthetic tradition usurped by Nazi propaganda (Beethoven or Wagner called on to incite collective zeal in public rallies, for example, or Goebbels’ lending his name and authority to the Hölderlin Society founded in 1943),

²³ See Heidi Hart, “Traces of a Tune: Form and Ideology in Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler’s *An die Nachgeborenen*,” in Word and Music Association Forum Conference Volume 2012, Stockholm University, July 2014.

²⁴ Wißmann, 109.

²⁵ Dieter D. Herrmann, “*Ich bin mit jedem Lob einverstanden*”: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch 1960-1962 (Leipzig: Salier Verlag, 2009), 12.

Eisler actively reclaimed texts by Mörike, Goethe, and Hölderlin. In the latter case, he radically fragmented the texts of iconic – and nationalistically read – poems such as “Heidelberg” and “Gesang des Deutschen,” sometimes changing their titles as well. Paradoxically, his breaking of the texts indicates more fidelity to their internal fractures and contradictions, in addition to Hölderlin’s actual, dialectical and cosmopolitan view of homeland, than most Nazi-era readings did, under the influence of Heidegger’s quasi-mystical celebration of the poet. Eisler’s interventionist approach to adaptation plays out further in his musical settings of Hölderlin, which draw on the “schöne Klang”²⁶ [“beautiful sound”] of nineteenth-century harmony, with its potentially narcotic effect, only to estrange it. Here the tension between “formalism” and “activism” is less easy to parse, since the two elements do not collide in a Brechtian model of dialectics; elements of Schubertian and Schumannian song meet and absorb disruptive dissonances or rhythmic breaks in a more Hegelian synthesis. This music works homeopathically, injecting into the 1940s cultural climate the very material poisoned under fascism, with an unsettling twist on every page. In addition, by pointing out the brittleness and fragility of his source materials as fixed in the literary canon – their “plaster” quality, as Brecht put it – Eisler brought them new life. In his own words,

“Ohne lebendige, dialektisch wache Zeitgenossenschaft erstarrt auch die kulturelle Vergangenheit; sie wird zu einem Stapelgut von Bildungsware, aus dem abstrakte Rezepte gezogen werden. Entscheidend bleibt, die Wechselbeziehung: kritische Beachtung der Gegenwart, dadurch produktiv ermöglichter Erbantritt der Vergangenheit.”²⁷

[Without living, dialectically wakeful contemporaneity, the cultural past also ossifies; it will become a staple commodity of cultivation-goods, from which abstract recipes are

²⁶ Bloch and Eisler, 260.

²⁷ Hanns Eisler, “Einiges über die Krise der kapitalistischen Musik und über den Aufbau der sozialistischen Musikkultur,” in *Musik und Politik, Schriften, 1948-1962*. In *Gesammelte Werke*, Series 3, Vol. 2, ed. Günter Mayer (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1982), 315.

wrought. What is vital is the interrelationship: critical attention to the present, and through this, productively engaged claiming of the past.]

After this painful but intensely creative period, both Eisler and Brecht faced further censure, this time on American soil, at the end of the war. In 1947 Eisler was called before the House Committee on Un-American Activities and responded with wry and weary humor to accusations of plotting to “take over” America with revolutionary songs he had actually composed in a very different context in 1920s Berlin.²⁸ Under the pressure of this investigation, and despite offering support to Eisler, Adorno removed his name from the current edition of *Composing for the Films*. Eisler and his wife Lou were deported in March 1948 and, after a brief stay in Vienna, and amid the gradual breakup of their marriage, Eisler returned to Berlin. Once again the site of postwar trauma, but this time in far more devastated form, the city became Eisler’s ground for working out a response to collisions of ideology and art. He later noted,

Als wir nach Berlin zurückkamen [1948] – wir hatten doch übers Radio diese scheußlichen Hitlerlieder gehört – da hatte ich einen solchen Ekel gegen das Marschieren überhaupt ... Brecht hat das ... verstanden, [aber er] vermißte auch unsre plebejischen Vulgarismen, die ja sehr notwendig sind. Aber es hat sich irgendwie ein Reif über dieses Genre gelegt durch Mißbrauch der Barbaren. Man mußte einige Jahre lang sehr achtgeben. Man brauchte eine Entwöhnungszeit. Leider ist ... [sie] viel zu kurz gewesen. Was ich heute im Radio höre von ... Kollegen, hat oft einen peinlichen Beigeschmack der Erinnerung an diese Zeit ...²⁹

[When we came back to Berlin [1948] – yes, we had heard these atrocious Hitler-songs on the radio – there I felt such disgust toward march music in general ... Brecht ... understood this, [but he] also missed our plebeian vulgarities that are really very important. But somehow this genre had accumulated rime, through the barbarians’ misuse. One had to take great care for a few years. There needed to be a withdrawal period. Unfortunately this ... has been too short. What I hear today on the radio from ... colleagues, often has an embarrassing aftertaste of the memory of that time ...]

²⁸ Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding Hanns Eisler*, U.S. House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, First Session, Public Law 601, September 24, 25, and 26, 1947 (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1947), 40.

²⁹ Bunge, 51, also quoted in Heike Amos, *Auferstanden aus Ruinen ... Die Nationalhymne der DDR 1949 bis 1990* (Berlin: Dietz, 1997), 91.

Eisler took this “withdrawal period” to heart in his own work, with the goal of developing a more direct, accessible musical language or “neue Einfachheit” [“new simplicity”].³⁰ That said, he continued to work on the dangerously “formalist” level as well, even in his most singable music, such as a German folksong project undertaken in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Though true “Socialist realism” in the Soviet sense – though this fluctuated with Stalin’s taste – would demand recognizable folk tunes with a utopian bent,³¹ and though Eisler did his best to stick to melodic directness, his penchant for politically attuned play with musical association often won out. A telling example is a nearly upside-down echo of the Haydn-based – and fascist-tainted – anthem “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles” in the opening line of the East German national hymn Eisler composed to text by Johannes Becher in 1949. It is not by accident that the texts of both anthems can be sung to either melody,³² in which a similarity to Peter Kreuder’s “Goodbye Johnny” has often been noted as well.

The early years of the German Democratic Republic afforded Eisler many opportunities to voice official Party lines in music. Also in 1949, he was commissioned to set text by Goethe in honor of the poet’s 200th birth anniversary celebration in Weimar and to celebrate the founding of the GDR. Goethe became the “moral handyman” of choice in this anti-fascist but intensely nationalist project of state-building, “a godfather of the socialist state.”³³ Eisler’s ostensibly celebratory Goethe work, a *Rhapsodie* for soprano and orchestra, turned out to be anything but

³⁰ See Wißmann, 177.

³¹ See Joy Calico, *The Politics of Opera in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1961*, doctoral dissertation, Duke University Department of Music, 1999, 28-47.

³² Amos, 54.

³³ Wolf Lepienez, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 160-161.

straightforward according to the Soviet model of Socialist realism, with its nationalist texts and strophic, folksong- or marchlike music. A kaleidoscopic work that veers from film-music citation to ironic Mahlerian lilt to percussive keyboard irruption, as the soprano voice embodies various voices from Goethe's equally complex *Faust II*, the *Rhapsodie* speaks to a time of postwar fragmentation and very fragile hope. Though composed in a deadline rush, and perhaps because of this, the work is not a carefully considered nationalist paean but shows all the scattered seams of a broken country attempting to rebuild. Eisler's Goethe settings that followed took this "centrifugal" – to use Mikhail Bakhtin's term³⁴ – dynamic even further, using literal fugue form to disseminate text and music through many voices rather than gathering them inward toward a clear, univocal political stance.

Not surprisingly, second-tier ideologues associated with the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, emboldened by the Moscow trials of Prokofiev and Shostakovich in 1948-49,³⁵ took issue with Eisler's "formalism," not only in his collage-like music but also in his approach to sources like Bach, treated with far less hierarchical reverence than dialogic play. The situation reached a crisis point in 1952-53, when Eisler's libretto for his projected opera *Johannes Faustus* came under harsh scrutiny for its carnivalesque rather than progressive narrative and for its portrayal of Faust as a negative example (in line with Brecht's *Mutter Courage*) rather than as a Socialist hero. The opera was never composed; Eisler plunged into a lengthy depression, which only worsened after Brecht's unexpected death in 1956 and the fallout from Khrushchev's "secret speech" (exposing Stalin's atrocities) the same year. Eisler considered moving to Vienna during

³⁴ See M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 270-273.

³⁵ See Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 468-544.

this time but, faithful to the Socialist state's ideals if not to its repressive practices, lived in Berlin until his death in 1962.

Late in Eisler's life, and with the of productive support of his third wife, the pianist Steffy Wolf, he returned to the poetry of Hölderlin in his *Vier ernste Gesänge* [*Four Serious Songs*], an homage to Brahms' late songs of a similar title. Instructing the singer to perform the music as if singing the text of a travel guide,³⁶ Eisler extended a move notable in his 1940s settings of the poet – a de-personalization of Hölderlin's lyric "I." An empty-sounding human voice, uttering the text like prose, becomes a chattering supplement to the orchestra. Reading Hölderlin's texts with both of these adaptations in the ear, the "I" becomes more contingent, its breaking-points more fragile, with other voices echoing in its vicinity. Drawing on his own previously composed music, most from film scores, Eisler surveyed the course of his politically and personally difficult life in this last song cycle. Dialectical tension between opposites marked his loyalties until the end: he supported both the "dissident" folk singer Wolf Biermann *and* the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Eisler died of a heart attack the following year.

Literature review and methodology

Much musicological literature on Eisler to date gives limited attention to his source texts but does shed light on the political and philosophical tensions at work in his songs. With the 1950s establishment of the East German journal *Musik und Gesellschaft* (*Music and Society*), which reported on concerts and East German musical tours in the West but was not available there,³⁷ musicology in the German Democratic Republic appears to have taken on a hermetic

³⁶ See Wißmann, 217.

³⁷ Laura Silverberg, "East German Music and the Problem of National Identity," in *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 37, No. 4, July 2009, 508-509.

character, dominated by Marxist criticism.³⁸ The reality is more complex. East German appraisals of Hanns Eisler's work were numerous in the 1970s; many exhibit more nuance and sophisticated analysis than might be expected, after Eisler's brush with Party censure in the early 1950s. Most of these studies take a dialectical approach, both in the historical sense of socio-politically mediated aesthetic change through time and in the aesthetic sense of oppositional, transformative forces at work in musical material. Examples include Fritz Hennenberg's richly illustrative 1971 treatment of Eisler's musical conclusions ("Zur Dialektik des Schließens in Liedern von Hanns Eisler" ["On the Dialectic of Closure in Hanns Eisler's Songs"]); a 1973 biography by Eberhard Klemm; Károly Csipák's 1975 book-length project problematizing folk-music elements in Eisler's music; definitive editions and commentary by Eisler archivist and editor Manfred Grabs in the 1970s and 80s; and several studies by Günter Mayer, who, with Hans-Werner Heister and Georg Knepler, worked to re-appraise musical dialectics for a new generation. After 1989, musicologists from the former East continued to publish on Eisler; even today, retired Humboldt University professor Gerd Rienäcker continues to revise his 1990s work on Eisler's Goethe settings.³⁹ Parallel to the East German critical reception of Eisler, Albrecht Betz has worked on Eisler – and in particular on his settings of Heine and Hölderlin – in Aachen and Paris since the 1970s.

³⁸ Anne Shreffler has noted the respectful tension between West German music historian Carl Dahlhaus and Marxist musicologist Georg Knepler in East Berlin, as well as the absorption of Adorno's form of Marxism in the West during the 1960s and 70s. Eisler scholar Günter Mayer later worked to bridge East German Marxist approaches to music, as embedded in the larger material movement of history, with Adorno's critical theory. See Anne C. Shreffler, "Berlin Walls: Dahlhaus Knepler, and Ideologies of Music History," in *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Fall 2003), 498-525.

³⁹ Gerd Rienäcker, "Hanns Eisler - ein Vorläufer der musikalischen Postmoderne?“, manuscript, 2015, and private correspondence, January 2015.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, post-Communist reappraisals of the composer's life and work in and out of Germany have included Eisler editor Peter Deeg's film-music studies; Heiko Amos' book on the East German national anthem; Joy Calico's work on Brecht and music; Stephen Hinton's investigations of music and ideology in Eisler, Weill, and Adorno; the 2012 compilation *Hanns Eisler: Angewandte Musik* that includes studies of his twelve-tone compositions, edited by Ulrich Tadday; Friederike Wißmann's 2012 biography *Hanns Eisler: Komponist. Weltbürger. Revolutionär*; and exile-studies work on Eisler by Horst Weber, Kyung-Boon Lee, and others. Several recent dissertations – Martha Sprigge's *Abilities to Mourn: Musical Commemoration in the German Democratic Republic (1945-1989)* (University of Chicago, 2013); Andreas Aurin's *Dialectical Music and the Lehrstück* (University of New South Wales, 2014); and Yana Alexandrovna Lowry's *From Massenlieder to Massovaia Pesnia: Musical Exchanges between Communists and Socialists of Weimar Germany and the Early Soviet Union* (Duke University, 2014) reflect a current "third wave" of interest in Eisler in political context, coinciding with the publication of a new edition of his collected works. This interest has spilled into the museum sphere, with a 2009 Eisler exhibit at the Jewish Museum in Vienna and a 2014-2016 installation of Eisler's twelve-tone music, in tandem with images from his FBI file, by artist Susan Philipsz in a number of gallery spaces, including the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin and the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.

Most of the older academic studies listed above – aside from those of Hennenberg, Betz, and Rienäcker – have not focused on Eisler's settings of nineteenth-century poetry. A notable contribution in this area is Claudia Albert's 1991 study *Das schwierige Handwerk des Hoffens: Hanns Eislers "Hollywooder Liederbuch."* This book, and a 2010 DMA document it influenced (Stanley Workman's *Hanns Eisler and His Hollywood Songbook: A Survey of the Five Elegies*

and the *Hölderlin Fragments*, Ohio State University), argue for an ultimately hopeful resolution to Eisler's musical-textual dialectics. Arnold Pistiak's engaging four-volume boxed set from 2013, which covers Eisler's Heine and Goethe settings, makes similar arguments for the composer's forward-thinking approach. Several lacunae appear in the scholarship to this point on Eisler and his settings of nineteenth-century poetry: first, a comprehensive study over the course of his career, and second, an analytical approach that teases out the tensions in Eisler's formal resistance to fixed ideology, gives both hope and mourning their due, considers the interplay of gender and voice(s), and reads the texts themselves as illuminated by Eisler's musical settings. My project fills these gaps within a larger framework of dialogic adaptation analysis, to be outlined below.

Within the larger area of intermediality, the field of adaptation studies has a long tradition of novel-to-film analysis, though recent work by Regina Schober (on Amy Lowell's poetic response to Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for String Quartet*⁴⁰) and others relate adaptation theory to word and music studies. Several foundational texts, Linda Hutcheon's 2006 *Theory of Adaptation* and the 2013 reappraisal *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, edited by Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, trace the field's development in terms of narrative and media transformation, problematize the idea of fidelity to source material, and consider the transmedial movement of shared elements such as rhythm between art forms.⁴¹ Two adaptation-studies essays from this recent compilation are particularly

⁴⁰ See Regina Schober, "Adaptation as connection: Transmediality reconsidered," in Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, eds. *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 89-112.

⁴¹ For a precisely delineated approach to transmediality, see Irina Rajewsky, *Intermedialität* (Tübingen: Francke, 2002) and "Border Talks: The Problematic Status of Media Borders in the Current Debate about Intermediality," in Lars Elleström, ed., *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

applicable to my project: John Bryant's "Textual identity and adaptive revision: Editing adaptation as a fluid text," which considers a "*work* [as] the sum of its versions,"⁴² and Jørgen Bruhn's "Dialogizing adaptation studies: From one-way transport to a dialogic two-way process," which draws on Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism to treat adaptation as "an open, fluid structure" in which a "cross-reading" of source and version reveals a paradox in which "both texts [are] results of each other" or are "secondary to each other" in a dynamic of reciprocal change.⁴³ Unlike Linda Hutcheon's free-standing adaptation model, a fluid or dialogic approach allows for new readings of source material. Both of these essays align with current efforts within adaptation studies to de-hierarchize not only the relationship of source and version but also that of theory and analysis.⁴⁴ Moving against the grain of older top-down, text-only models, most notably Harold Bloom's "revisionary [and compensatory, in the Freudian sense] ratios" in *The Anxiety of Influence*,⁴⁵ these horizontal approaches are well suited to analysis of Eisler's text-settings, with their intermedial movement and attitude of dialogic play rather than reverent/rebellious engagement with canonical works. In each chapter of this project, a close reading of source texts, in both original and fragmented form, is followed by musical analysis of Eisler's adaptations. The chapter concludes with a cross-reading back *into* the source texts, a

⁴² John Bryant, "Textual identity and adaptive revision: Editing adaptation as a fluid text," in Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen, 47-67.

⁴³ Jørgen Bruhn, "Dialogizing adaptation studies: From one-way transport to a dialogic two-way process," in *ibid.*, 69-88.

⁴⁴ See Kamilla Elliot, "Theorizing adaptations/adapting theories," in *ibid.*, 19-45.

⁴⁵ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Bloom's model of source-responses such as "tessera" (completion by antithesis) and "kenosis" (disjunction as isolation from source text) is useful when read in tandem with adaptation studies, but as Thomas Pfau and Jørgen Bruhn have pointed out, respectively, Bloom's model is based solely on text-to-text rather than intermedial response and suppresses the dialogic aspect of adaptation.

process that illuminates elements of texture or voice less obvious without Eisler's musical setting in mind. This process takes into account the texts' own historical contexts, to be discussed below in terms of reception and intervention, but horizontal cross-reading also allows for a fresh reading of material usually met *only* at the textual level, despite intermedial resonances.

In light of the political pressures Eisler witnessed and faced throughout his life, his settings of nineteenth-century poetry are more than aesthetic dialogue. They also function as interventionist adaptation, particularly during the Nazi era and in the early years of the German Democratic Republic. This study provides reception history for each poet in question, to show the stakes in Eisler's projects: in the case of Hölderlin, right-wing and even direct military appropriation of the poet's works continued from the First World War through the Second; Goethe became a key source of nationalist pride in the early GDR. Whether on the right or left, a tendency toward one-sided, ideologically secure reading robbed the poets' texts of their inherent complexity, ambiguity, and fragility. Eisler's radical fragmentation of the poems, which he then set to *un*-settling music, disturbs this security and opens the poems to multivalent readings. This compositional approach relates to Chantal Mouffe's work on political "agonism," as she notes art's interventionist capacity to undermine hegemonic systems. Though she focuses on the subversion of capitalism, rather than of fascist or Soviet-style hegemony, her point about "agonistic public spaces, where the objective is to unveil all that is repressed by the dominant consensus,"⁴⁶ relates to Brecht's and Eisler's exposure of gestures, tropes, or affective states often taken for granted in the dominant socio-political sphere.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See Chantal Mouffe, "Art and Democracy: Art as an Agonistic Intervention in Public Space," in *Art as a Public Issue*, No. 14, 2008, 12.

⁴⁷ See also Bertolt Brecht, "Kleines Organon für das Theater," in Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei, and Klaus-Detlef Müller, eds., *Bertolt Brecht, Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, Vol. 23, Schriften 3 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), 65-105.

In Eisler's music, this exposure occurs through musical dialectics, a dynamic to which my study is not limited but that I keep in view throughout each chapter's textual-musical analysis, citing Eisler's own writings on dialectical materialism in music as well as the Marxist musicological tradition that continued to develop after his death. According to this approach, any musical dialectic occurs within the larger dynamic of historical change. On the aesthetic plane, this dynamic can be described in a similar way to the dialectical movement of opposites in Hölderlin's poetry, though in his work it can also be thought of as oscillatory. In music, contrasting elements sometimes work in a dynamic of overcoming that leads to synthesis through "Aufhebung" [lifting up, dissolving, subsuming] according to the Hegelian model of dialectics; sometimes they continue in unresolved tension that opens space for critical reflection, an engine for Brechtian estrangement.⁴⁸ In this latter case, a piece of music can take a stance in direct opposition to the text. The Brecht-Eisler "Ballade von der Judenhure Marie Sanders," written to protest the 1933 Nürnberg Laws, posits troubling text about the humiliation of a "Jew-whore" against a catchy, syncopated chorus. If any synthesis occurs, it is in the participants' and listeners' critical response, not in the song itself. Eisler thought of his musical task on both dialectical levels: this micro-level of material oppositions and the macro-level of often contrarian engagement in historical events. In his 1943 setting of Hölderlin's "Gesang des Deutschen" ["Song of the German"], the composer was fully aware of the hyper-nationalist associations accumulated around the text. His project surprised even Brecht, and Eisler later recalled,

Einen Text muß ein Komponist erst einmal widerspruchsvoll ansehen ... Das gehört zur Dialektik des Künstlers. Ich sage mir, wenn ich zurückkomme, will ich sagen: "Ihr Scheißkerle! Aber immerhin habe ich für euch komponiert!"⁴⁹

⁴⁸ For a detailed explanation of Brechtian dialectics in music, see Andreas Aurin, *Dialectical Music and the Lehrstück: An Investigation of Music and Music-Text Relations in This Genre*, doctoral thesis, School of the Arts and Media, University of New South Wales, 2014.

⁴⁹ Bunge, 192-194.

[A composer must first look at a text in a contrarian way ... This belongs to artist's dialectic. I say to myself, when I come back, I want to say: "You shitheads! But I've composed something for you anyway."]

Eisler's breaking of the text and setting it as a rhythmically and harmonically destabilized song embodies this contrarian response, which also points to the composer's personal conflict in relation to his fascist-overtaken homeland. Here, at the micro-level, Hegelian dialectics appear, in which one element is subsumed into a new whole:⁵⁰ traditional lyric elements gradually overtake twelve-tone writing to create an off-kilter Schumannian sound-world. A third, hybrid form of dialectics could be argued for in all of Eisler's canonical settings, a model that encourages multiplicity, more in line with Hardt and Negri's revisionary approach to Marxism⁵¹ and particularly applicable in Eisler's kaleidoscopic Goethe settings in the early 1950s.

Throughout this project, I prefer to treat musical dialectics as a useful and historically appropriate tool in approaching Eisler's music but rely more heavily on Mikhail Bakhtin's approach to polyphony (reclaiming his musical term for musical analysis, with awareness of its more specific application to the novel) in order to illuminate complex artworks that include dialectical tensions and processes. Eisler's work certainly exploits contrasting elements to expose music "as the drug that it is,"⁵² as it casts and breaks the spell of lyric charisma, or in Fredric Jameson's terms, referring to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, as the composer enacts "a poetics of

⁵⁰ For a similar application of Hegelian dialectics to Eisler's music, a common practice among East German musicologists, see Károly Csipák, *Probleme der Volkstümlichkeit bei Hanns Eisler* (Munich: Musikverlag Emil Katzschichler, 1975), 243.

⁵¹ See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁵² Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno, *Composing for the Films* (London and New York: Continuum, 2007), 15.

reification” which actually – and homeopathically – serves to “dereify” familiar material.⁵³ What becomes even more compelling in Eisler’s canonical settings is his refusal to let them resolve into fixed form.

Eisler’s use of voice(s) is particularly telling in his musical interventions. This project takes a threefold approach to voicing in Eisler’s music: phenomenological description of what the music requires of the voice (extremely high passages, for example, or speechlike “reportage”); investigation of gender and voice as it manifests in the music (masculine vulnerability in the Heine choruses, for example); and analysis of polyphonic voicing (not only in the literal polyphony of choral music but also in layers of citation and formal parody) and the ways in which this complexity affects cross-reading of the text. My experience as a singer rehearsing and performing Eisler’s music helps to ground my phenomenological analysis in such observations as the frequency of acceleration markers in the Hölderlin songs; in addition, my longtime work as a voice teacher with baritone and tenor students informs my sense of the registral extremes the Heine choruses demand of the male voice, for example. Applying readings such as Helmut Lethen’s *Cool Conduct* and other studies of Weimar-era masculinity adds to my discussion of voice and gender, as do studies of ideologically charged gender tropes associated with the female voice, such as Susan McClary’s now-classic *Feminine Endings*, as well as work on voice by Lydia Goehr, Laura Wahlfors, and Elizabeth Wood. My study of plural voicing (and multiple subject positions) in Eisler draws mainly on Mikhail Bakhtin’s “Discourse and the Novel” and *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Bakhtin’s term “heteroglossia,” as it is usually translated from the Russian “*raznorechie*” or ““different speech-ness,””⁵⁴ is usually applied to

⁵³ Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), 169.

⁵⁴ Lowry, 37.

various angles, registers, or literal dialects in novelistic prose; his term “polyphony,” despite its already strong associations with European classical music, is more useful here in its breadth and emphasis on “voice” or “sound” rather than on “tongue” as a linguistic system. Bakhtin distinguishes between the orchestrated language of the novel, or “image of language,” and the materiality of sounding speech, claiming that novelistic polyphony is actually “mute,”⁵⁵ particularly in Dostoevsky’s slippery indirect address. With this caveat, I apply Bakhtin’s approach metaphorically to elucidate the layers of singing and instrumental voice, as well as of citation and parody, in Eisler’s orchestration and even “novelization” of the poetic voice. In addition, Bakhtin’s description of Dostoevsky’s “centrifugal” movement, as distinguished from a centripetal, centralizing dynamic,⁵⁶ becomes important in this project, as Eisler’s use of literal fugue form and sometimes kaleidoscopic montage moves away from univocal – and politically centralized – utterance. At times this musical polyphony empties or de-personalizes the lyric “I” in Hölderlin’s texts; at times it voices what Adorno calls the “kollektive Unterstrom” [“collective undercurrent”] in which the “I” becomes more than simply a subject.⁵⁷ In the case of Eisler’s Goethe *Rhapsodie*, the single singer voices several genders and subject positions at once, complicating not only the gendered tropes associated with her soprano voice but also her ostensible role as *the* voice for a new Socialist state.

Key terms

A discussion of three key terms – parody, “Stimmung,” and elegy – sheds additional light on the formal and material-affective elements of Eisler’s text-settings. To begin with parody, it is

⁵⁵ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 354, 379, 383.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 270-273.

⁵⁷ Theodor Adorno, “Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft,” in *Noten zur Literatur I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 59.

important to clarify that in literary studies, the term is usually associated with satire,⁵⁸ though a distinction between parody's focus on form and satire's on referent is helpful. Roman Jakobson's well-known 1958 lecture "Linguistics and Poetics" frames parody as a poetic mode that engages received "codes," while satire takes on a "referential" function.⁵⁹ Certainly the two can overlap and often do. At the genre level, parody can heighten historical differences through formal mimesis,⁶⁰ as in the secular Brecht-Eisler oratorios imitating Bach with no satirical intent, or it can explicitly ridicule, as in Heine's send-ups of political poetry that operate as much through tone as they do through mimetic strophic forms. Eisler's Heine project is an adaptation of a textual parody, constituting a double process of response in very different historical moments.⁶¹ That much of this process occurs at the level of the fragment, rather than as whole-cloth mimesis, links it to other modernist works that approach parody piecemeal. This music is also a broad genre parody of the nineteenth-century political chorus, stretching the form to its most harmonically dissonant and vocally difficult edges. Though this music does work satirically in its

⁵⁸ Fredric Jameson distinguishes between the critique implicit in parody and the emptiness of postmodern pastiche. See Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 17.

⁵⁹ See Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," http://www.akira.ruc.dk/~new/Ret_og_Rigtigt/Jakobson_Eks_15_F12.pdf. Web, accessed 26 February 2016.

⁶⁰ Linda Hutcheon distinguishes between two forms of musical parody. At the genre level, "musical parody is an acknowledged reworking of pre-existent material, but with no ridiculing intent ... a re-creative exercise in free variation." Musical parody "with humorous intent," on the other hand, is often "a limited phenomenon, usually restricting itself to quoting isolated themes, rhythms, chords, and so on." Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody. The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 2000), 67.

⁶¹ Formal parody can be seen as "a form of historicization" that "provokes a critical attitude towards the present through re-contextualizing the past" (Aurin, 82) or, in Bakhtin's treatment of genre, can be seen as containing the past in the present, "old and new simultaneously." See M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 106. My project attempts to acknowledge historical differences while also allowing pre- and post-text to inform each other reciprocally.

critique of nationalist zeal, Eisler's later Hölderlin settings function differently, enacting formal parody of Lieder only in terms of their musical "codes," not as satirical referents.

The word "parody" stems from the Greek *parōidia*, burlesque song,⁶² combining *pará* (beside[s]) and *ōidē* (ode or song). The aspect of parody in which something is shifted, next to, or awry allows gaps to appear between text and its parodic object, often exposing falseness in the language parodied.⁶³ Linda Hutcheon links parody to the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* in its "dialectical relation between identification and distance,"⁶⁴ a phenomenon that can occur in adaptation generally, though adaptation is not always parodic in either formal mimicry or satirical intent. Robert Phiddian describes a "parodic erasure" that "disfigures its pre-texts in various ways that seek to guide our re-evaluation or refiguration of them,"⁶⁵ in Eisler's settings of nineteenth-century poetry, this often violent disfigurement does allow the texts to be read differently and reveals their force in a new way. Literal gaps in the Hölderlin's texts, for example, make the speaker's sense of despair palpable, with the source's words of hope and utopian vision cut out. Writing on visual art, Jean-Luc Marion has shown how a work's material charisma can emerge through such gaps as a "givenness" with a life of its own, even as a "shock," through "the complexity of mingled effects."⁶⁶

⁶² Aristotle's reference to Hegemon treats parody as a "mock-heroic ... narrative poem," though controversy remains over its use as polemic in Greek drama. Simon Dentith, *Parody*, The New Critical Idiom Series (London: Routledge, 2000), 10. For a detailed taxonomy of parodic forms, and for terms such as "hypotext" for parodic source material, see G. Genette, *G. Palimpsestes: La Littérature au Second Degré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982).

⁶³ Thanks to Thomas Pfau for these observations, Berlin, 7 July 2014.

⁶⁴ Hutcheon, xii.

⁶⁵ Robert Phiddian, *Swift's Parody* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13-14.

⁶⁶ Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 43, 48-49. Marion draws on Heidegger's "vorhanden"

The affective dynamic at work in Eisler's adaptation process relates to a second key term here, the German word "Stimmung." Its English translations include "mood," "atmosphere," "attunement," "tone," "feeling," and "musical tuning." That the word is an extension of "Stimme," or voice, allows for such fruitful links as Thomas Pfau has noted: "The 'voice' (*Stimme*) of ... an ontological mood (*Stimmung*) takes the temperature of conscious historical existence."⁶⁷ The vocal intensity of Eisler's Heine choruses, for example, composed amid Weimar-era "coolness," indicates uncomfortable "heat" in that historical moment. This intensity is not only a somatic-affective phenomenon but also allows for critical response. Avoiding a pitfall common to contemporary affect theory (i.e. deepening the old mind-body split by assuming emotion to be entirely non-cognitive), Pfau treats "Stimmung" as a "quasi-cognitive relation to the world in the specific modality of *emotion*, that is, as an intrinsically evaluative experience," though this disposition "will not be transparent to individuals or communities."⁶⁸ Part of the reason for this is the semantic elusiveness of "Stimmung" itself, making its cognitive and critical aspects difficult to track. David Wellbery has noted that poetically evoked mood does not create a "gegenständlich fixierbare Sinnkomplexion, weil Stimmungen a-thematische

and "zuhanden" distinction to note how attention gathers where taken-for-granted materials or connections break down. Marion also notes the paradox of givenness that reveals itself, sometimes as excess, through lack and rupture, 312-314.

⁶⁷ Pfau, *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 12-13.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 12. See also Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," in *Critical Inquiry* 37, (University of Chicago) Spring 2011, 434-472. Johannes Pfeiffer has traced the critical capacity of "Stimmung" through Heidegger (on its "erschließende Kraft" or "investigative power") and Karl Jaspers (on its "Erhellungskraft" or "illuminatory power"). See Sandra Richter, *A History of Poetics: German Scholarly Aesthetics and Poetics in International Context, 1770-1960* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 231.

Gesamtbefindlichkeiten sind”⁶⁹ [“concretely fixable meaning-complex, because moods are athematic comprehensive states”]. This elusiveness is often paired paradoxically with affective directness, in the sense that “concentrating on atmospheres and moods offers literary studies a possibility for reclaiming vitality and aesthetic immediacy.”⁷⁰ The “voice” of a mood certainly speaks through text and music, but it is their *mediating* elements that manifest that voice and reveal its critical capacity. To return to Eisler’s choruses, between Heine’s poem “Die Tendenz” and the music, an uncomfortable “Stimmung” arises from a complex of musical-material signals that expose symptoms of historical trauma; these symptoms can be inferred from the cultural context of 1920s Berlin and from musical echoes of Eisler’s earlier wartime works. They do not register as mere sentiment, as Eisler himself would later define “Stimmung” in a 1932 essay:

Wenn wir die bürgerliche Musik am besten beschreiben wollen, so müssen wir den Ausdruck ‚Stimmung‘ gebrauchen. D. h. die bürgerliche Musik will den Zuhörer ‚unterhalten‘. Die Aufgabe der Arbeitermusik wird es sein, die Sentimentalität, den Schwulst aus der Musik zu liquidieren, da diese Empfindungen vom Klassenkampf ablenken.⁷¹

If we want to describe bourgeois music best, we need to use the term “Stimmung.” This means that bourgeois music wants to “entertain” the listener. The task of workers’ music will be to liquidate sentimentality and pomposity out of music, since these affects distract from the class struggle.

As is often the case, Eisler’s baldly Marxist language belies the complexity and ambivalence of his own work. The element of pain in Eisler’s Heine choruses perturbs their parodic stance and

⁶⁹ David Wellbery, “Der gestimmte Raum,” in Anna-Katharina Gisbertz, ed., *Stimmung: Zur Wiederkehr einer ästhetischen Kategorie* (Paderborn: W. Fink, 2011), 165.

⁷⁰ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 12.

⁷¹ Eisler, “Neuen Methoden der Kampfmusik,” 155-156. In his conversation with Hans Bunge, 24 August 1961, Eisler would reflect on his settings of nineteenth-century poetry and affirm that while “Sentimentalität” is to be condemned, “Sentiment” itself is not. See Bunge, 290.

works critically in its own right, revealing the human costs of what the songs attack: German nationalist bombast and subservience to false authority.

Also at work throughout Eisler's nineteenth-century text settings are thematic and formal references to mourning. Tracing these references on a spectrum of elegiac expression – using the term not in the Greek-inherited formal sense of the elegiac couplet but rather as a modality for voicing grief⁷² – allows important distinctions to emerge. If one end of the spectrum is a public lament, or voicing of the *experience* of mourning, and the other is a more private expression of grief, Eisler's text-settings work along this entire range. The 1925 Heine choruses are intensely public not only in their scoring for four voice parts but also in their over-the-top parodic-satirical volume; the 1940s Hölderlin songs, which Eisler imagined he was composing “für die Schublade”⁷³ [“for the drawer”] in Nazi-era exile, and which he framed in the larger context of other elegies in the *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, are as intimate as they are polyphonically “orchestrated.”⁷⁴ Eisler's Goethe *Rhapsodie* composed in 1949 fluctuates between orchestral voicing of lament – again in the public sense – in postwar Germany and cinematic scoring that attempts to voice optimism despite violent musical interruption. Late in life, Eisler returned to the poetry of Hölderlin in his *Ernste Gesänge* cycle; this time, the literally orchestrated music

⁷² In his chapter “Ancient Greek Elegy” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. Karen Weisman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 13, Gregory Nagy traces the word back to the Greek *elegos*, referring both to “the singing of a *sad and mournful song*, to the accompaniment of a wind instrument called the *aulos*,” though Thomas Pfau finds this etymology “tenuous” (ibid. 547) and focuses on the gradual “contraction,” after 1700, of the elegiac from the Greek hexameter-pentameter to “a thematic of loss.” (Ibid.) Nagy distinguishes elegy from lament, which he gives this “working definition: *lament is an act of singing in response to the loss of someone or something near and dear, whether that loss is real or only figurative.*” (Ibid. 13). For the purposes of this dissertation, I prefer to treat the elegiac as a modality in which a range of public and private mourning expressions occurs.

⁷³ Bunge, 70-71.

⁷⁴ Thanks to Jørgen Bruhn for this observation, 19 January 2015.

can be located toward the center of the elegiac spectrum, with reflection on private loss shot through with references to painful events, such as the revelation of Stalin's atrocities in 1956, processed in the public sphere.⁷⁵ Though the elegiac mode can certainly draw in the listener with a melancholy "Stimmung," it also carries a sense of distance from the loss or trauma leading to this affective state.⁷⁶ Cathy Caruth's work on trauma, drawing on Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, explores latency, delayed processing, and voice in post-traumatic catharsis, providing psychoanalytic support for the distancing implicit in the elegiac mode.⁷⁷ The critical distance always important to Eisler is evident in his use of minor keys, slow passages, or formal tropes for mourning such as the Baroque "lamento" or descending passacaglia that marks, among many possible examples, the "Crucifixus" movement in Bach's *B Minor Mass*. By drawing attention to and then disengaging from musical forms associated with sorrow in the European tradition, Eisler also points to their constructed contingency.

Outline of chapters

Chapter 1 of this dissertation concerns Eisler's 1925 settings of Heine: "Die Tendenz," "Der Wechselbalg," and "Die Britten zeigten sich sehr rüde," all poems written amid 1840s political tensions in Paris and in the German exile community to which Heine uncomfortably belonged. This music is presented in the context of the German patriotic choral tradition it parodies, post-1919 revolutionary disillusionment, and the formalism debates of the early twentieth century. This chapter also traces Heine's problematic reception history, which took the

⁷⁵ For a detailed treatment of music and mourning in the German Democratic Republic, see Martha Anne Sprigge, *Abilities to Mourn: Musical Commemoration in the German Democratic Republic (1945-1989)*, doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago Department of Music, 2013.

⁷⁶ Ane Martine Lönneker, Ane Martine, "The Peculiar Case of Elegiac Feeling: Genre, Rhythm, Affect," conference presentation, Words and Music Association Forum, Aarhus, Denmark, 14 November 2014.

⁷⁷ See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

form of thinly veiled anti-Semitism even in the nineteenth century and also reflects Heine's refusal of ideological rigidity, however progressive his thinking. Research to this point has treated Eisler's Heine choruses as a young composer's experimental, parodic grotesquerie, noting their formal and thematic critique of the often-nationalist Liedertafel or male glee-club tradition, in addition to their embodiment of Heine's critical stance toward the tone-deaf political poetry of the 1840s. That said, even Arnold Pistiak's recent study, the first to focus solely on the choruses,⁷⁸ fails to note their insistent tropes of lament: repeated examples of the Baroque "step of sorrow," a descending line of half-steps, and intensely sustained high notes for the male voice, a registral extreme also associated with the performance of lament. This mode of expression is apparently lacking in Heine's texts, unless they are read "backwards" with Eisler's music in mind, at which point melancholic aspects of Heine's parodic Goethe allusions (completely cut in Eisler's version) begin to surface. This chapter confirms that Eisler's radical re-functioning of Heine reveals the human costs of nationalist bluster and political subservience, amid Weimar-era disillusionment with the "revolution" of 1918-19 and ongoing post-World War I trauma. This chapter also relates Helmut Lethen's work on Weimar-era "cool conduct" to questions of masculinity and the German *Männerchor* tradition, richly problematized in Eisler's music.

Chapter 2 concerns Eisler's cycle of Hölderlin songs composed while in Nazi-era exile in Hollywood. That Eisler chose a poet so conspicuously co-opted for German nationalist ideology via Heidegger, Hellingrath, and even Goebbels,⁷⁹ in order to voice his own sense of a lost homeland, is striking in itself. The poems he set ("An die Hoffnung," "Andenken," "Der

⁷⁸ See Arnold Pistiak, *Revolutions gesänge? Hanns Eislers Chorlieder nach Gedichten von Heinrich Heine* (Berlin: Edition Bodoni, 2013).

⁷⁹ For a detailed chronicle of Hölderlin's ideologically charged twentieth-century appropriations, see Robert Savage, *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe: Heidegger – Adorno – Brecht*. (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008).

Frieden,” “Die Heimat,” “Heidelberg,” and “Gesang des Deutschen”) are even more striking for their easily-misappropriated themes of homeland and Germanness, though Hölderlin was generally far more concerned with Greek-inflected cosmopolitanism and local village politics than with nationalist claims. Eisler’s own writings indicate a wish to restore the “Jacobin” aspect of Hölderlin and to reclaim his words as speaking for a homeland lost to fascism. Close readings of Eisler’s fragmented Hölderlin texts, similar to his striking lines and sometimes stanzas from Heine in his men’s choruses, show his refusal to take the literary canon at its politically two-faced value. This chapter relates Eisler’s project to Thomas Mann’s novel *Doktor Faustus*, composed in the same time and place of exile, both works grappling with art as political matrix and metaphor. My analysis focuses most on Hölderlin’s “An die Hoffnung” [“To Hope”] with a close reading of the text and attention to Eisler’s formal parody of and estranging homage to Schumann’s songs. Throughout the cycle, lyric charisma accumulates and is interrupted, a process that often leads to a final, destabilizing postlude or cadence. In addition, layers of other “voices,” from the piano to allusions to Schumann, Schubert, and even Harold Arlen, orchestrate these songs into a less strictly poetic and more novelistic, polyphonic form, in the Bakhtinian sense; the lyric “I” becomes gender-neutral (or at least flexible in its voicing) and paradoxically less personal in these intimate settings of Hölderlin. A final cross-reading points to a secularized fragility that Eisler’s music brings out in the texts.

Chapter 3 discusses Eisler’s postwar *Rhapsodie*, set to text-fragments from *Faust II*, and several settings of Goethe’s poetry from Eisler’s exile period into the early 1950s. Goethe’s political appropriations on the right and left inform this chapter, as does Eisler’s turn to more simple and direct musical forms in the late 1940s and early 1950s. His *Rhapsodie* is not as straightforward as it appears, however, working in a polyphonic, centrifugal form in which piano

irruptions destabilize the text's ostensibly glowing outlook, voiced by a soaring soprano with its gendered associations with redemption. Background on Eisler's commission to compose the *Rhapsodie*, for the "Goethe-Festtage der deutschen Nation" (a dual celebration of Goethe and the founding of the East German nation) in 1949 Weimar, helps to illuminate the hopes and pressures at work on the piece, in addition to the phenomenon of postwar "Goethe communities" in both East and West Germany. This chapter also discusses Eisler's failed *Johannes Faustus* opera project, which treats its farmworker-protagonist as a negative example, in the sense of Brecht's *Mutter Courage*, rather than as a socialist hero,⁸⁰ and the consequences for Eisler as the lionized but also problematic "GDR composer."

The dissertation's fourth and final chapter returns to Hölderlin, in Eisler's orchestral settings of the poet's work late in his life, during a time of disillusionment not only with the Soviet legacy in East German politics, and his own fall from favor in that system, but also following the death of Brecht. Hölderlin's shifting place in the Cold War-era canon (Theodor Adorno's "Parataxis" essay as a rigorous rebuttal of Heidegger's earlier appropriation of the poet, for example) and Eisler's return to an early influence, Johannes Brahms, informs my discussion of ideologically charged relationships to nineteenth-century art. That Eisler orchestrated one of his earlier Hölderlin settings, changing metrical infrastructure and musical texture, adds another layer of adaptation. Tracing the cycle's tension between vocal reportage and lyric sweep, this chapter shows the poetic voice changing into a more prosaic persona whose words require reading "between the lines." This late cycle *re-cycles* Eisler's exile songs in a time of his disillusionment with the system opposite the one he had worked to protest in the 1940s; it sounds like an elegy for the East German state he had once valorized for its anti-fascist ground.

⁸⁰ See Wißmann, 186-209.

The dissertation's conclusion returns to the initial questions of interventionist adaptation in Eisler's settings of nineteenth-century poems, to see how these works from 1925 to 1962 voice dissent and how they work on the source poems in return. The conclusion also summarizes my findings on gender, ideology, and voice to see how these works reflect or resist inherited cultural norms, and reflects on modernity's discomfort with aesthetic charisma, or the "gift" in Jean-Luc Marion's sense, as something received and not made.⁸¹ Overall, this project considers Eisler's text-settings as complex responses to varying political pressures in the early and mid-twentieth century, revealing a nuanced approach to ideology and aesthetics that much politically inflected music lacks. *Contrary Voices* makes a case for music that combines activism with affect in a critical way, and for the continued relevance of the nineteenth-century lyric, particularly in the richness of its multiple, intermedial, and often politically fraught adaptations.

⁸¹ See Marion, 312-314.

CHAPTER 1

HEINE AT THE BREAKING POINT: THREE MEN'S CHORUSES

The sounds are not those the poet chose; so we lean on the borrowed rhythms, toward the agonized sense of what is said.

Suzanne Gardinier, "The Pitches Between the Keys"

Introduction

In the Brecht-Eisler film *Kuhle Wampe* from 1929/30, the "Solidaritätslied" ["Solidarity Song"] interrupts a scene on a crowded train. A working-class young woman speaks up to those with no apparent wish to change the world; an abrupt cut to a U-Bahn tunnel shows a stream of workers from behind, as the well-known Brecht singer Ernst Busch and male chorus sing the "Vorwärts, nicht vergessen"⁸² ["Forward, don't forget"] march. The music brings its own abrupt shift, from 4/4 march time to a 2/4 break near the end of each verse; though sometimes seen as increasing the march's forward drive,⁸³ this break is very much in keeping with Hanns Eisler's

⁸² Fritz Hennenberg, Fritz, ed., *Brecht Liederbuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 204-206. See also Bertolt Brecht, *Kuhle Wampe (or Who Owns the World?)*, dir. Slatan Dudow, script Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Ottwalt, music Hanns Eisler (Prometheus Film, 1932), DEFA Film Library, 2008, DVD.

⁸³ Thanks to Stefan Litwin for this observation, Talking Music Eisler Symposium, UNC Chapel Hill, 3 March 2016. A similar break (into 3/4 time) occurs in Eisler's 1930 workers' song "Der Rote Wedding."

suspicion of music that leads to narcotic effect, the “vor allem bequemsten Rauschform”⁸⁴ [“above all most soothing form of intoxication/noise”]. With its minor key and percussive drive, the song combines associative tropes of lament and agitation. Eisler’s song has its roots in a long tradition of German political choruses dating back into the nineteenth century, and in his own late-1920s’ Kampflieder influenced by Soviet “mass songs” often in minor keys.⁸⁵ This chorus has long carried iconic workers’-movement associations, and its drive toward political resistance continues to spur adaptations, from an ironic folk-pop treatment by the contemporary Brecht-inspired duo Misuk to a rap-choral version by Ivory Coast Germanist Kauadio Atobé.

Less well known among Eisler’s choral songs, and more revealing of the formative tensions in his Weimar-era work, are his 1925 settings of Heinrich Heine’s poetry for men’s chorus, Opus 10. These choruses both imitate and complicate Heine’s parody of 1840s political bluster in “Die Tendenz,” “Die Britten zeigten sich sehr rüde,” and “Der Wechselbalg.” Eisler’s choice to set Heine, considered problematic enough in his lifetime to have lived in Paris exile, and vilified by Karl Kraus and others in the twentieth century for an apparent lack of respect for the German language and its literary weight, actually reveals a similar critical approach in composer and poet: the exposure of empty, received aesthetic tropes by their own means. Unlike the “Solidaritätslied,” fairly contained and predictable despite its metric break, Eisler’s three Heine pieces sound explosively from within their compositional frameworks. They are less musically and vocally accessible than his later Kampflieder, which were scored practically

⁸⁴ See Hanns Eisler, “Fortschritte in der Arbeitermusikbewegung,” *Gesammelte Schriften 1921-1935*, in *Hanns Eisler Gesamtausgabe*, Series IX, Schriften, Vol. 1.1, ed. Tobias Faßhauer and Günter Mayer (Wiesbaden and Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2007), 109.

⁸⁵ For a thorough analysis of German-Soviet exchanges in political music and mass singing during the Weimar period, see Yana Alexandrovna Lowry, *From Massenlieder to Massovaia Pesnia: Musical Exchanges between Communists and Socialists of Weimar Germany and the Early Soviet Union*. Doctoral Dissertation, Duke University Department of Music, 2014.

enough for the “Komintern-Lied” to be sung in protest against the Communist-demonstration ban in 1929 Berlin.⁸⁶ The majority of Eisler scholars view these early choruses as aggressive, forward-thinking experiments in parodic grotesquerie, by a composer forbidding himself affective modes he could voice more freely in exile two decades later, modes his recent biographer Frederike Wißmann has termed “Trauer, Resignation, sogar Verzweiflung”⁸⁷ [“sorrow, resignation, even despair”]. The music itself reveals a more complicated dynamic. The choruses’ extremes of range and volume, combined with musical tropes such as the Baroque “step of sorrow,” express masculine vulnerability in what appears to be dialectical collision with Heine’s parodic stance. This dynamic also draws on associative musical “Stimmung,” or mood, to expose the human costs of war and failed revolution. Heine’s poetry demands a more complex relationship to affect than Eisler may have first intended; reciprocally, reading Heine’s poetry in light of Eisler’s music draws out less obvious, polyphonic subject positions in the text.

A postwar war zone

The timing of Eisler’s Heine settings is difficult to pin down, since the composer was in transit from Vienna to Berlin through the second half of 1925, but recent scholarship points to the choruses’ “home” as Berlin.⁸⁸ Eisler arrived in Berlin in 1925, at a time of post-World War I trauma, still only partially processed, and violent political fragmentation. As David Stevenson has noted, “Six million Germans were either disabled veterans, their family members, or dependent survivors of the dead: 2.7 million had some permanent disability, 533,000 were

⁸⁶ Wißmann, 81.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 16.

⁸⁸ See Arnold Pistiak, *Revolutions gesänge? Hanns Eislers Chorlieder nach Gedichten von Heinrich Heine* (Berlin: Edition Bodoni, 2013), 10.

widows, and 1,192,000 were orphans.”⁸⁹ The left-wing “so-called revolution”⁹⁰ of 1918-19 had led to the outward abolition of German monarchy, but with “many old ghosts”⁹¹ remaining in the Weimar Assembly, and frequent right-wing assassinations condoned by the courts. These volunteer Freikorps hit men were “led by officers of the old army and recruited through nationalist and anti-bolshevik slogans, to put down unrest and disarm workers’ militias ... the actions of the *Freikorps* were typically carried out with a self-indulgent brutality.”⁹² Though the smaller Communist league Rote Frontkämpferbund carried out attacks as well, left-wing political violence received far harsher punishment. Despite a brief ban on groups like the Freikorps under Allied pressure in 1920, “in the mid-1920s Germany saw the re-emergence of legal and open paramilitary leagues (Wehrverbände).”⁹³ Within the left wing, fissures between Communists and Socialists, and between what Peter Gay has called “Spartacists and moderate Socialists,” led to open fights “in Berlin and in the provinces, in politicians’ meetings and in the streets, in workers’ councils and at funerals for victims of right-wing thugs.”⁹⁴ National celebrations took on a painfully divided character, manifest in music: “at a government-organized service for the war dead in Berlin in 1924 the silence was shattered when rival sections of the crowd sang the

⁸⁹ David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 454.

⁹⁰ Peter Gay, *Weimar culture: the outsider as insider* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), 10.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Eve Rosenhaft, “Brecht’s Germany: 1898-1933,” in Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 10.

⁹³ Stevenson, 466, 455.

⁹⁴ Gay, 13.

‘Internationale’ and ‘The Watch on the Rhine.’”⁹⁵ This context helps to explain the intensity of Eisler’s Heine settings, as well as their critical engagement with the ever-politicized German choral tradition.

A factor to consider in Eisler’s music for male voices is the agonistic masculinity culture of post-World War I Germany. “Shell shock,” or what is called Post-traumatic Stress Disorder today, was met with both sympathy and contempt; as Eve Rosenhaft notes, “both during and after the war military and medical authorities remained divided over whether the sufferers were to be regarded as genuine casualties and, if so, whether their sufferings were compensatable as ‘war wounds’ or were the consequence of an inherent psychological weakness.”⁹⁶ In her study of gender in the Weimar Republic, Katharina von Ankum notes that “the [First World] war experience confronted men with societal displacement and cultural ‘castration,’” particularly for those returning to a large city like Berlin.⁹⁷ Klaus Theweleit’s “much-debated”⁹⁸ 1987 *Male Fantasies*, which mainly concerns fascist views of the body, also uses World War I-era autobiographical texts by Freikorps officers to form a link “between men’s struggle to reconstruct their familiar gender identities in the face of dramatic social change and their perception of Weimar Germany as a non-nation.”⁹⁹ Helmut Lethen refers to the figure of the “war cripple” as a “specific variant of the expressionist creature” in an urban world that tried to deny his existence in order to protect its sense of stability:

⁹⁵ Stevenson, 454.

⁹⁶ Rosenhaft, 6.

⁹⁷ Katharina von Ankum, ed., *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 6.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

His is a particularly precarious case: he has what remains cool armoring of the soldierly persona and embodies the creature's injured organic substance, which the armor was supposed to protect. His appearance necessarily recalls a situation that overwhelms the survivors with shame and disgrace. And thus society tries to conceal him, a strategy strained by the presence of 2.7 million invalids at the end of World War I and enforcing “restraint” (*Verhaltenheit*) on the cripples themselves to make their presence tolerable.¹⁰⁰

Though Eisler was not yet in contact with Brecht, it is interesting to note that the playwright was working on his unfinished Lehrstück *Der Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer* between 1926 and 1930, taking on questions of post-World War I vulnerability among deserting soldiers and pointing out the “reverse gender hierarchy” in which ex-soldiers’ wives resented their “weakness.”¹⁰¹ These lines spoken by Brecht’s title character voice the same kind of creaturely vulnerability that leaks through Eisler’s choruses: “Auch die Brust wird verkümmert/ In den Verstecken und wozu noch verbergen/ Einen verkommenen Mann”¹⁰² [“The chest, too, withers/ In its hiding place, and why conceal/ A degenerate man”]. Artifacts and images from Weimar-era Berlin are telling as well. A 2014 centenary exhibit on World War I at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin included prosthetic limbs, leather-and-metal evidence of Lethen’s exoskeletal armoring that also signals the grotesque, in the form of incomplete or mutilated bodies¹⁰³ after the war. The exhibit also featured paintings by Erich Drechsler and Hans Richter, from around 1918, that exploit extremes of hard and soft to show crumpling, pleated bodies and melting faces amid geometric shafts of light or rigid concrete blocks. George Grosz’s caricatures of life in 1920s Berlin, also shown in the exhibit, juxtapose the fleshly and

¹⁰⁰ Helmut Lethen, *Cool conduct: the culture of distance in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 196.

¹⁰¹ Thanks to Andreas Aurin for this observation, Berlin, 8 July 2014.

¹⁰² Bertolt Brecht, *Werke*, Band 10, *Stücke 1* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag and Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), 489.

¹⁰³ Edwards and Graulund, 2.

the insectile, as they eroticize softness (usually in female form) against catatonic, sometimes faceless and limbless male figures. Brecht's text and these images suggest a social environment with conflicting attitudes toward male vulnerability, positing it against outward hardness or depicting it as a form of broken brittleness in itself. In Eisler's music, the Weimar-modernist impulse toward stark juxtaposition is manifest in a montage of hard sonic aggressiveness and softer musical elements that indicate mourning. At times the two collide in high notes that push the male voice to a difficult edge, sounding aggressive and vulnerable at the same time.

The Männerchor on right and left

Some background on the German male-chorus tradition helps to clarify Eisler's parody of older nationalist models – a move Albrecht Betz calls “satirischen, streckenweise noch grotesken”¹⁰⁴ [“satirical and also partly grotesque”], as it echoes the very traditional form it bursts from inside, much like Heinrich Heine's own poetic work. Community singing groups and the less formal Hausmusik tradition, which required equal skill in four-part harmony,¹⁰⁵ were well established by Eisler's time. For male choruses, separate from the Hausmusik tradition and generally more politicized, part-singing usually remained within a comfortable vocal range:

The basic model for two tenors and two basses, set in strophic form with emphasis on melodic linearity and straightforward harmonic progressions, enjoyed the greatest popularity and circulation. Since musical education in Germany did not encourage countertenors, the overall range normally did not exceed two octaves.¹⁰⁶

Even before Napoleon's 1815 defeat, patriotic male singing groups in Berlin had taken inspiration from Carl Friedrich Zelter's 1808 coining of the term “Liedertafel,” usually translated

¹⁰⁴ Albrecht Betz, *Hanns Eisler: Musik einer Zeit, die sich eben bildet* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1976), 50, 56-57.

¹⁰⁵ Thanks to Andreas Aurin for this observation, Berlin, 6 July 2014.

¹⁰⁶ Barbara Eichner, *History in Mighty Sounds: Musical Constructions of German National Identity 1848-1914* (Suffolk, UK and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2012), 205.

as “glee club” but with vague allusion to the Arthurian Round Table.¹⁰⁷ After 1815, and with the rise of the middle class in German-speaking regions, male singing societies spread far beyond Berlin, with growing political influence.¹⁰⁸ The Swiss Häns Nägeli’s 1817 *Gesangbildungslehre für Männerchor* [*Instruction in Group Singing for Male Chorus*] added pedagogical weight to the movement. Composers Schubert, Mendelssohn, Bruckner, Wagner, Brahms and Schumann directed Liedertafel and composed part-songs for such groups, from Carl Maria von Weber’s 1814 anti-Napoleonic songs to Schumann’s patriotic 1847 choruses composed in Dresden.¹⁰⁹ Barbara Eichner has noted that while mixed (male and female) choruses “found their most prestigious outlet in the genre of the oratorio ... the male choir movement was strongly politicized from the start,” with “a triple agenda of social improvement, aesthetic education and national unification.”¹¹⁰ Though this agenda shifted in emphasis from the Vormärz period to the failed revolutionary projects of 1848 and later German unification in 1871, with varying censorship pressures in the music-festival sphere, this report from an 1845 festival in Würzburg shows the prevailing ideological tone:

Alle bessern Empfindungen, alle erhabenen Gefühle, Gottesfurcht, Vaterlandsliebe, Treue, Freundschaft und Eintracht, warden durch denselben [Gesang] angeregt, gewekt [*sic*] und gestärkt, der Keim der Tugend zum Enthusiasmus angefacht, Muth und

¹⁰⁷ Timothy David Sarsany, *Robert Schumann’s Part-songs for Men’s Chorus and Detailed Analysis of Fünf Gesänge (Jagdlieder), Opus 137* (D.M.A. Document, Graduate Program in Music, Ohio State University, 2010), 25-27.

¹⁰⁸ James M. Brinkman, “The German Male Chorus of the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Research in Music Education*, Vol. 18, no. 1, Spring 1970, 18.

¹⁰⁹ Sarsany, 28-29, 47. For a detailed treatment of Schumann’s political choruses, see John Daverio, “Einheit – Freiheit – Vaterland: Intimations of Utopia in Robert Schumann’s Late Choral Music,” in Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds. *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 59-77.

¹¹⁰Eichner, 163.

Thatkraft zur Begeisterung gesteigert, ... Ja, nicht blos der Sänger, auch der Zuhörer wird ein besserer Mensch.¹¹¹

[All superior sentiments, all sublime feelings, fear of god, love of the fatherland, fidelity, friendship and harmony, are stimulated, awakened, and strengthened [by song], the seed of virtue is kindled to enthusiasm; courage and energy are heightened to genuine zeal ... Yes, not just the singer but even the listener will become a better person.]

The choral societies' pedagogical bent and participatory view of both singers and listeners anticipates the Brechtian approach to choral singing, particularly in the *Lehrstücke*;¹¹² on the other hand, the societies' appeal to emotion and collective zeal is exactly what Brecht and composers like Eisler would later strive to avoid. Another conservative-nationalist marker of the nineteenth-century choral movement was the use of Viking and Meistersinger emblems, combined with historicist language to add a sense of warlike masculinity to a mostly middle-class choral movement. "Songs that were performed by a group of Vikings or Teutonic tribesmen," Eicher notes, "allowed the singers to present themselves as the warrior-heroes they would have liked to be, albeit in historical role-play rather than in their everyday selves as accountants, civic servants or school teachers."¹¹³ The growing mass market for sentimental or "brazenly cheerful ... *Liedertafelstil*" songs, "the organisational *Vereinsmeierei* and the nationalist posturing" of such music, and the weakening of political drive after 1871 led to a

¹¹¹ Maximilian Römer, *Das erste deutsche Sängerefest gefeiert in Würzburg in den Tagen des 3. bis 7. August 1845: Ein Erinnerungs-Album für dessen Theilnehmer* (Würzburg, 1845), 104, in Eichner, 182.

¹¹² Andreas Aurin, "Dialectical Music and the *Lehrstück*: An Investigation of Music and Music-Text Relations in This Genre," doctoral thesis, School of the Arts and Media, University of New South Wales, 2014, 2-3.

¹¹³ Eichner, 202.

decline of the male singing group, though, on the Left, “ostensibly apolitical choruses allowed the SPD to continue clandestine work” when the party was banned from 1878 to 1890.¹¹⁴

After World War I, left-wing choral societies drew largely on Berlin’s male youth culture. On both the right and left wings, young men sought group identity and rebellion against petty-bourgeois values in a number of outlets, from cinema and the Karl May novels to street gangs, “Wandervogel” groups,¹¹⁵ and agitprop theater troupes. Some workers’ choruses did include women, but “[s]truggle and the political songs that were to accompany it were conceived as male preserves.”¹¹⁶ This was a time in which right-wing ideologues valorized “[h]ardness” as “masculine,” over “softness” coded as “feminine,” and when dichotomies of “useful versus useless,” often gender-coded, played out on the left as well.¹¹⁷ On the right, men’s choral cycles such as the 1935 *Feier der neuen Front* were explicitly dedicated to Hitler, one of many manifestations of National Socialist zeal in Männerchor form.¹¹⁸ The genre functioned as a “Besatzungsinstrument”¹¹⁹ [instrument of occupation] on either end of the German political spectrum, but with formal-associative differences.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Richard Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin: Agitprop, Chorus, and Brecht* (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1997), 5.

¹¹⁵ See Gay, 77-78.

¹¹⁶ Bodek, 58.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 3.

¹¹⁸ Fred K. Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982), 20-21.

¹¹⁹ See Zalfen and Müller, 9-30.

¹²⁰ Slavoj Žižek argues that the chorus “Tomorrow Belongs to Me” in the musical *Cabaret* performs fascist ideology but could just as easily be set to leftist lyrics; I would counter that the song’s 3/4-time, D-major lilt mimics conventions of Nazi Heimat music, while most leftist choruses of the 1930s drew on Russian-influenced minor-key tropes and percussive drive, juxtaposed march rhythm with jazz syncopation, or parodied right-wing “folk” idioms as a form of distancing. See Sophie Fiennes and Slavoj

In the 1920s, Berlin choruses split into competing ideological camps, with Socialist workers' choruses and Communist agitprop groups such as the Rote Sprachrohr reflecting the left-wing political split in Berlin in 1918, and right-wing male choirs such as the proto-Nazi Spielschar youth group promoting folksy, martial, and classical music, with occasional mystery plays to add "a religious, mystic aura to the performance, further linking it to the deep mists of German tradition."¹²¹ The socialist Deutsche Arbeitersängerbund (DASB) doubled in size, to half a million members, between 1920 to 1928,¹²² though more revolutionary-leaning singers broke from the group after 1931.¹²³ SPD choruses carried a longer tradition than their Communist counterparts, having operated underground until the turn of the century and then, once the Party was again legal, having raised funds for campaigns and workers' strikes.¹²⁴ In his own history of working-class music, Eisler notes the movement's fragmentation during the pre-Weimar period, due to class comforts that gave workers in the SPD's "right wing" access to musical education, concert clothing, and what he termed "philistine" tendencies.¹²⁵ Eisler's view of the movement's further split during the Weimar years, between petit-bourgeois and

Žižek, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (Blinder Films Production for BFI and Film4, 2012, Zeitgeist Films DVD, 2013). Nazi Kampflieder, such as Arno Pardun's 1931 D minor march dedicated to Goebbels, often borrowed from leftist class-struggle music in its use of minor keys and percussive meter, but without drawing on its critical innovations by composers such as Eisler. See Prieberg, 129-131.

¹²¹ Bruce Campbell, "*Kein schöner Land: The Spielschar Ekkehard and the Struggle to Define German National Identity in the Weimar Republic*," in Applegate and Potter, 136.

¹²² Pamela M. Potter, "German Musicology and Early Music Performance, 1918-1933," in Gilliam, 94.

¹²³ This break and founding of the Kampfgemeinschaft der Arbeitersänger [Militant Community of Worker-singers] followed the DASB's executive's refusal to produce Brecht and Eisler's *Die Maßnahme* in 1931. See Betz, 110-111.

¹²⁴ Bodek, 5.

¹²⁵ Hanns Eisler, "Geschichte der deutschen Arbeitermusikbewegung von 1848," reprinted in Hanns Eisler, *Musik und Politik, Schriften*, Vol. 1, 1927-1948 (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1981), 211-30.

Communist choruses, reflects “a period of bitter polemics ... when Socialists and Communists blamed each other for the total defeat of the working-class movement at the hands of the Nazis.”¹²⁶ The SPD’s cultural leadership did, according to Richard Bodek, attempt to “teach that German culture was proletarian as well as bourgeois,” re-contextualizing canonical books, plays, and music to reveal these classics as “either revolutionary in their own right or forerunners of a revolutionary movement to come,” particularly in the appropriation of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert.¹²⁷ This complex relationship to Germany’s cultural past in Socialist and Communist musical circles prepared the ground for Eisler’s own precariously formalist experiments. He was not willing to disown musical tradition, as he drew on Bach and Brahms in his own work, or to give up Schoenberg’s twelve-tone formalism entirely. Like Heine in the previous century, Eisler found “philistine” falseness to critique both on the right and on the splintered left. His Op. 10 choruses take a stance as critical as it is activist.

A modernist experiment

Eisler’s Op. 10 choruses are difficult to date exactly but appear to have been in process just before and during his move from Vienna to Berlin.¹²⁸ They emerged at a time of distancing from his teacher Schoenberg and certainly reflect tension between twelve-tone modernism and applied proletarian music. The young composer’s break with his teacher, evidenced in a series of vehement letters, reveals an anti-systemic chafing that would outlive his youth. Shortly after his

¹²⁶ Bodek, 6.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 42.

¹²⁸ Cornelius Schwer, “Hanns Eisler um 1925,” lecture, Musikhochschule Freiburg, December 1992, in *Visionen und Aufbrüche. Zur Krise der modernen Musik, 1908-1933* (Kassel: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1994), <http://cornelius-schwehr.de/fileadmin/images/Texte/Vortraege/Eisler1925.pdf?PHPSESSID=5110a82f5a73b21d8cd4265f0d777a67>, page 1, accessed 11 August 2014.

move to Berlin, Eisler wrote Schoenberg a petulant letter belying the twelve-tone-inspired dissonances that in fact shape his Heine choruses:

Mich langweilt moderne Musik, sie interessiert mich nicht, manches hasse u. verachte ich sogar. Ich will tatsächlich mit der ‚Moderne‘ nichts zu tun haben. Nach Möglichkeit vermeide ich sie zu hören oder zu lesen.¹²⁹

[Modern music bores me, it doesn't interest me, some I even hate and despise. I actually want nothing to do with 'the modern.' I avoid hearing or reading about it whenever possible.]

Eberhardt Klemm goes so far as to call Eisler's unease "hatred for everything conventional, particularly for the 'modern'" in its bourgeois-formalist mode. While the composer hoped for a "social revolution" that would overtake that aesthetic world, he also argued that the "genius" of his teacher's innovations must be folded into that revolution.¹³⁰ His Op. 5 *Palmström* takes on serialism "more playfully than seriously,"¹³¹ and a number of experimental works composed during his first years in Berlin show his attraction to satire and grotesquerie. Even before receiving formal training in Vienna, Eisler had responded to his own trauma as a repeatedly wounded soldier in an Austrian regiment by sketching an anti-war cantata (apparently burned in a dug-out fire¹³²) and composing six settings of Christian Morgenstern's poetry, the *Galgenlieder* (*Gallows Songs*), with the subtitle "Grotesques," in 1917. Shortly after arriving in Berlin, he set two satirical nursery rhymes cited by Walter Benjamin in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1925, part

¹²⁹ Hanns Eisler, letter to Arnold Schoenberg, 9 March 1926, in *Briefe 1907-1943, Hanns Eisler Gesamtausgabe*, Series IX, Schriften, Vol. 4.1, ed. Jürgen Schebera and Maren Köster (Wiesbaden and Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2010), 41.

¹³⁰ Eberhardt Klemm, "'I Don't Give a Damn about This Spring' – Hanns Eisler's Move to Berlin," trans. Karin von Abrams, originally published in *Sinn und Form* XXXIX Heft 3, 1987, in Blake, David, ed., *Hanns Eisler: A Miscellany*. Contemporary Music Studies (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 4-7.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 4.

¹³² David Blake, "The Early Music," in Blake, 12.

of his Op. 11 *Zeitungsausschnitte* [*Newspaper Clippings*], with its parodies that address post-war suffering through proto-Brechtian estrangement. These parodies also border on the grotesque, for example in a children's song Theodor Adorno called "sadistic" that operates through harmonic mockery of Wagner's *Tristan*.¹³³ During this time, Eisler also pieced together an idiosyncratic diary-cantata for women's trio, tenor, violin, and piano that expresses resentment toward Schoenberg and toward himself, quoting the "Internationale" and his teacher's Chamber Symphony Op. 9. By 1927, Eisler had become the pianist for the Rote Sprachrohr (Red Megaphone) agitprop troupe, and by 1928 held a teaching position at the Marxistische Arbeiterschule in Berlin, composing simple yet innovative choruses like the "Solidaritätslied." His more conflicted, musically challenging work that came before his establishment as a class-struggle composer reveals the process that made this possible. It also opens a window on a decade as much in need of mourning as of class-consciousness-raising.

Because of their difficulty and Eisler's status as a young and relatively unknown composer in Berlin, the Op. 10 songs were not performed at the time of their composition and are still a rarity in choral repertoire.¹³⁴ Eisler's developmental process eventually found practical support in Berlin Communist circles, to which he gained access through his brother Gerhart and sister Ruth.¹³⁵ He also benefited from the 1920 founding of Piscator's Proletarian Theater, sometimes credited with anticipating Brecht's epic theater with its "few props beyond signs and banners and [use of] simple dress and language," as much the result of a shoestring budget as of ideological

¹³³ Ibid. 13.

¹³⁴ Schwer, 1.

¹³⁵ Ruth Eisler's problematic relationship with Communism eventually led her to denounce both of her brothers before the House Un-American Activities Committee. See Michael Haas and Wiebke Krohn, eds., *Hanns Eisler: Mensch und Masse*, on behalf of the Jewish Museum Vienna (Vienna: Wien Kultur, 2009), 201.

zeal.¹³⁶ The 1927 Baden-Baden festival and Eisler's subsequent collaborations with Brecht later helped to locate him in a politically engaged musical community. Eisler's work with the Rote Sprachrohr [Red Megaphone], beginning in 1927, allowed him the active collaboration he needed with choral singers. His militant choruses of the late 1920s are far easier to sing than his Heine songs, without sacrificing dialectical innovation (e.g. the collision of march rhythms and off-kilter, jazz-influenced syncopation).

For all the Kampflieder impulses brewing in Weimar Germany, however, Albrecht Betz's 1976 Eisler study holds that by the time of his involvement with Berlin choral culture, sentimental "Liedertafelien" threatened to take over most singing societies.¹³⁷ Eisler's choruses specifically critique the German Männerchor tradition, for this sentimentality as well as for unthinking patriotic zeal. At the same time, this music touches on the bond between men in war and its attendant trauma, a phenomenon made popular in nineteenth-century ideas of the "Männerbund, (male comradeship) ... which protected the 'national body' imagined as feminine."¹³⁸ The First World War, for all the disillusionment it produced, had also led to a "Verbrüderungskultur" evident in the popular poetry of Johannes Becher (published under the title *Verbrüderung* in 1916) and the mythos surrounding the 1914 "Weihnachtsfrieden," in which French and German soldiers had joined in singing on Christmas Eve. A 1924 Käthe Kollwitz lithograph, also titled *Verbrüderung*,¹³⁹ reveals the potential for masculine vulnerability in this brotherhood-culture, which often tended toward more aggressive or self-protected forms in Weimar Germany, as this chapter's discussion of "coolness" culture will show.

¹³⁶ Bodek, 3-4.

¹³⁷ Betz, 56-57.

¹³⁸ Eichner, 85.

¹³⁹ Image used with permission from the Nasher Museum at Duke University.

Fig. 1.1



Eisler's background as a student of Schoenberg complicates his relation to gendered aspects of German choral music. Though 1920s modernism certainly allowed for the fruitful disunities noted above,¹⁴⁰ music-critical rhetoric of the time attacked the “*Unfruchtbarkeit*, the sterility or infertility, of contemporary musical creation.”¹⁴¹ Schoenberg himself fell under the influence of Weiningerian discourse and valorized atonality as “asexual” and somehow purified of the male/female associations with major and minor keys, a problematic discourse in its own right.¹⁴² The Weimar-era culture of “coolness,” also reflected in Brecht's distancing strategies, carried associations with “unsentimental” masculinity, more than of androgyny or asexuality.

¹⁴⁰ For a discussion of Ernst Bloch's “nonsimultaneity” and Siegfried Krakauer's “bits of chance” in their descriptions of Weimar-era aesthetics, see David C. Durst, *Weimar Modernism: Philosophy, Politics, and Culture in Germany 1918-1933* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 1-28.

¹⁴¹ Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson, eds., *Masculinity and Western Musical Practice* (Surrey, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 184.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 203.

Eisler's 1932 essay "Neue Methoden der Kampfmusik" makes this stance clear, claiming that music in the bourgeois tradition

...spielt eine passive Rolle. Ausnahmen davon müssen wir die Militärmusik, die z.B. das Marschieren organisiert, also eine aktive Bedeutung hat ... Die Musik der Lehrstücke und Chöre wird eine scharfe, kalte Grundhaltung haben müssen.¹⁴³

[... plays a passive role. We must take from it military music, which for example incites marching and therefore has an active meaning ... The music of the Lehrstücke and choruses will need to have a sharp, cold basic attitude.]

Unlike his late-1920s Kampflieder, and despite Albrecht Betz's long-accepted view that Eisler's Heine choruses look to the future in their parodic disavowal of past cultural institutions and modes of expression,¹⁴⁴ I will argue that these text-settings play on conflicting tropes of parody and lament, both dependent on dynamic and technical extremes in the male voice. Eisler's compositional process may well have outpaced his commitment to the "cold" and "sharp," as complex and tension-filled music responded to Heine's texts. Whether these early choruses also reflect what Helmut Lethen considers a collective form of self-protection in the Weimar era's post-World War I "culture of shame," a performative act in which "[male] individuals flee into the masses,"¹⁴⁵ will be another question to consider.

Heine's articulate dissent

Eisler's Op. 10 choruses respond not only to tensions in Weimar-era masculinity but also to cultural falseness in a number of forms: aggressive nationalist zeal, a "new" republic infiltrated by old aristocratic powers, and the emptiness of poetic-patriotic language in a country

¹⁴³ Eisler, "Neuen Methoden der Kampfmusik," *Gesammelte Schriften 1921-1935*, in *Hanns Eisler Gesamtausgabe*, Series IX, Schriften, Vol. 1.1, ed. Tobias Faßhauer and Günter Mayer (Wiesbaden and Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2007), 155-156.

¹⁴⁴ Betz, 54.

¹⁴⁵ Lethen, 19-20.

deeply damaged by war. In light of such falseness, not to mention growing right-wing nationalism, Heine could hardly have been a more fitting choice for 1920s text-setting. By this time, the poet was no longer a selectively read source of countless nineteenth-century musical settings but, particularly in light of Karl Kraus' 1910 polemic "Heine und die Folgen" ["Heine and the Consequences"], considered a problem. (That he had been a problem in his own time, repeatedly censored for progressive writings even as it was discovered in the late 1840s that he had been on King Louis Philippe's payroll,¹⁴⁶ shows how difficult his quasi-revolutionary, quasi-monarchist politics were to pin down.) As Anthony Phelan has noted, "Kraus's essay powerfully associates Heine with central issues in modernity, while simultaneously trying to block his reception," using anti-French metaphors of sexual and economic commodification.¹⁴⁷ In 1956, the hundredth anniversary of the poet's death, East German academics actively worked to reclaim Heine from these early twentieth-century accusations as well as from his Nazi-era appropriation – albeit anonymous, in the case of the anthologized "Lorelei." Now taken up "in a specifically socialist spirit"¹⁴⁸ by a new cultural elite focusing on his political poems and *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen*, Heine eventually became a revolutionary "Denkfigur" with a bonus, biographical associations with Marx.¹⁴⁹ Also in 1956, in the West, Theodor Adorno's radio address "Die Wunde Heine" ["Heine the Wound"] attempted to rehabilitate the figure

¹⁴⁶ Thanks to Thomas Pfau for this clarification, Berlin, 7 July 2014.

¹⁴⁷ Anthony Phelan, *Reading Heinrich Heine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3-19.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 22.

¹⁴⁹ For a thorough study of Heine reception in the newly founded GDR, see Astrid Henning, *Heinrich Heine und Deutschein in der DDR: Wie Literatur Herrschaft sichert*. (Marburg: Tectum, 2007).

Kraus had accused of superficial satire, “[d]as Instrument zum Ornament geworden”¹⁵⁰ [“the instrument turned ornament”], only to echo some of these readings in terms of mimicry, speechlessness, and manipulation.¹⁵¹ Both Kraus and Adorno were concerned with Heine’s 1829/30 *Buch der Lieder*, with its knight and water nixie, lilies, nightingales, and doves – all of which could be read as comfortable poetic tropes but, when read carefully, reveal their critique of this received aesthetic emptiness.

Heine was a master of embodying the very form he punctured from within. Phelan claims that the *Buch der Lieder* “unmasks the inwardness of late Romantic subjectivity through and as a merely superficial replication,” but not without its own traces of private mourning: “[the poet] cannot recall the lost immediacy of landscape and language but only the condition of alienation which has overwhelmed them and him.”¹⁵² As Thomas Pfau has elaborated, this melancholic aspect of Heine’s lyric poetry carries with it political resentment in the post-Napoleonic era of German censorship and philistinism, in a “dialectical bond between nostalgic regret and subterranean hostility.”¹⁵³ Heine’s political poetry before and after the failed revolutions of 1848, when he was exiled from German lands and living in Paris, brings this hostility aboveground, but not as bald polemic, a stance he had witheringly critiqued in his 1840 *Ludwig*

¹⁵⁰ Karl Kraus, “Heine und die Folgen,” in *Schriften zur Literatur*, ed. Christian Wagenknecht (Stuttgart: Universal-Bibliothek, Stuttgart, 1986), 35.

¹⁵¹ See Theodor Adorno, “Die Wunde Heine,” in *Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994). 95-100.

¹⁵² Phelan, 27.

¹⁵³ Thomas Pfau, *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 392-393. Fredric Jameson frames the “‘theory’ of *ressentiment*” as a “fundamental nineteenth-century ideologeme ... in its ‘unmasking’ of ethics” and its binary oppositions. See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 88.

Börne. Eine Denkschrift. He had long favored contradiction, as “an idiosyncratic political thinker, concerned with matters of justice for the downtrodden but deeply suspicious of the ‘Pöbel,’ the mob that knew nothing of poetry and could ... so easily be won over to the worst.”¹⁵⁴ Albrecht Betz allows that Eisler’s choice of these texts links the revolutionary disappointments of 1848 to those in 1918,¹⁵⁵ without allowing for the possibility of mourning in the choruses; my close readings of text and music will question that claim.

The three Heine poems altered and set by Eisler are “Die Tendenz,” [“The Tendency” or “Tendency-poetry” as polemical genre], “Die Britten zeigten sich sehr rüde” [“The Britons turned out to be quite uncouth”] and “Der Wechselbalg” [“The Changeling”]. Eisler worked the texts into a three-chorus sequence titled “Tendenz – Utopie – ‘Demokratie,’” with the last title in ironic quotes. At the time of the poems’ composition in the late 1840s, Heine had lived in Paris for almost two decades, along with over 60,000 other Germans, most of them economic refugees.¹⁵⁶ Having internalized the history of the French Revolution and St. Simonian social-revolutionary thought, and speaking functional French, Heine contributed frequently to French newspapers – despite an interruption, during the ban on *Junge Deutschland* in 1835¹⁵⁷ – and socialized with such luminaries as Victor Hugo, Karl Marx, George Sand, and Gérard de Nerval, along with pianist-composers Liszt and Chopin. The revolutionary role he felt had fallen to him went public in 1833, in a letter published in an anonymous article against censorship in the newspaper *Unser Planet*:

¹⁵⁴ Susan Youens, *Heinrich Heine and the Lied* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 177.

¹⁵⁵ Betz, 54.

¹⁵⁶ Bernd Kortländer, *Heinrich Heine* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003), 43.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 45.

Ich werde in jenem Journale alles Mögliche thun, um den Franzosen das geistige Leben der Deutschen bekannt zu machen; dieses ist meine jetzige Lebensaufgabe, und ich habe vielleicht überhaupt die pacifike Mission, die Völker einander näher zu bringen. Das aber fürchten die Aristokraten am meisten; mit der Zerstörung der nationalen Vorurtheile, mit dem Vernichten der patriotischen Engsinigkeit schwindet ihr bestes Hülfsmittel der Unterdrückung. Ich bin daher der inkarnirte [*sic*] Kosmopolitismus, ich weiß, daß dieses am Ende die allgemeine Gesinnung wird in Europa, und ich bin daher überzeugt, daß ich mehr Zukunft habe, als unsere deutschen Volksthümler, diese sterblichen Menschen, die nur der Vergangenheit angehören.¹⁵⁸

[I will do everything possible, in every journal, to make the Germans' spiritual-philosophical life known to the French; this is my current life-project, and perhaps I even have the peaceful mission to bring the two peoples nearer to each other. But this frightens the aristocrats the most; with the destruction of national prejudices, with the obliteration of patriotic narrow-mindedness, their best hope for oppression vanishes. I am therefore cosmopolitanism incarnate, I know, that in the end this will be the general attitude in Europe, and I am therefore convinced that I have more of a future than our German Volk-cult celebrants, these mortal beings who only belong to the past.]

In fact the 1830s were anything but peaceful for Heine, who faced the same discrimination as Ludwig Börne and his set, fell out with his uncle Solomon over money, and saw German-French relations decay and crass nationalism rise up in response. By 1848, Heine's health collapsed amid the political upheaval in his former homeland and in Paris. He made a last visit to the Louvre in May 1848, taking refuge from the crossfire in the streets, and reflected on the Venus de Milo statue, symbol of old German ideals of Greek culture, helpless with no arms. This famous passage is significant not only for its timing but also for its acknowledgement of lament directed toward the figure of a broken body, even with its slightly tongue-in-cheek conclusion:

Nur mit Mühe schleppte ich mich bis zum Louvre, und ich brach fast zusammen, als ich in den erhabenen Saal trat, wo die hochgebenedeite Göttin der Schönheit, unsere liebe Frau von Milo, auf ihrem Postamente steht. Zu ihren Füßen lag ich lange und ich weinte so heftig, daß ich dessen ein Stein erbarmen mußte. Auch schaute die Göttin mitleidig

¹⁵⁸ Heinrich Heine, letter to unknown addressee, Paris, published in *Unser Planet*, 11 April 1833, p. 348, Heinrich-Heine-Institut, Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf, Heinrich-Heine-Portal, http://hhp.unitrier.de/Projekte/HHP/Projekte/HHP/briefe/06briefdatenbank/tabelle/chronologisch/index_html?widthgiven=30&letterid=W21B0427&lineref=0&mode=1. Web, accessed 26 May 2014.

auf mich herab, doch zugleich so trostlos als wollte sie sagen: siehst du denn nicht, daß ich keine Arme habe und also nicht helfen kann?¹⁵⁹

[I dragged myself with effort until I reached the Louvre, and I nearly collapsed, when I stepped into the sublime hall where the exalted goddess of beauty, our dear Lady of Milo, stands on her pedestal. I lay long at her feet and wept so vigorously, that a stone of those feet must have felt mercy. The goddess herself looked sympathetically down at me, but at the same time comfortlessly, as if she wanted to say, don't you see, that I have no arms and cannot be of any help?]

Heine's response to the revolution combined excitement with his own sense of helplessness and distaste for collective chaos, which he described to his publisher Julius Campe as

“Universalanarchie, Weltkuddelmuddel”¹⁶⁰ [“universal anarchy, world-in-a-mess”]. The poet's physical breakdown was more than a response to ambivalent revolutionary hopes: soon he would be confined to what he famously called his “Matrazengruft” or “mattress-grave,” with symptoms likely the result of syphilis that paralyzed his legs and blinded him. In a June 1848 letter to Campe, he worried that “[a]uch meine rechte Hand fängt an zu sterben u [sic] Gott weiß ob ich Ihnen noch schreiben kann”¹⁶¹ [“my right hand, too, is starting to die, and God knows whether I can still write to you”] and sketched out a detailed plan for future editions of his work, though he would live as an invalid until 1856. After a short stay in a Passy nursing home in 1848, he moved

¹⁵⁹ Heinrich Heine, “Nachwort zum Romanzero,” in *Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritisch Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, Vol. 3/1, ed. Frauke Bartelt and Alberto Destro (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1992), 181.

¹⁶⁰ Heinrich Heine, letter to Julius Campe, Passy, 9 July 1848, Heinrich-Heine-Institut, Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf, Heinrich-Heine-Portal, http://hhp.uni-trier.de/Projekte/HHP/Projekte/HHP/briefe/01briefevon/chron/B1847/index_html?widthgiven=30&letterid=W22B1234&lineref=0&mode=1. Web, accessed 27 May 2014.

¹⁶¹ Heinrich Heine, letter to Julius Campe, Passy, 7 June 1848, *Ibid.*, http://hhp.uni-trier.de/Projekte/HHP/Projekte/HHP/briefe/01briefevon/chron/B1847/index_html?widthgiven=30&letterid=W22B1222&lineref=0&mode=1. Web, accessed 26 May 2014.

with his wife back into the city, where he continued to write, see visitors, and complain about the traffic noise and neighbors' piano playing at all hours.¹⁶²

“Tendenz”

Heine's “Die Tendenz,” adapted by Eisler as simply “Tendenz,” is a “satirical-grotesque”¹⁶³ response to the blustering political poetry of the late 1840s. Heine felt that his fellow German exiles in Paris, in particular, were caught up in verse that did not allow for critical distance or literary idiosyncrasy. Heine did not consider poetry to be ideological in itself (in its culturally privileged status, for example) but spoke for protecting it, aware of how “sticky” any political agenda can be as it adheres to art¹⁶⁴ and, conversely, how art can strive too hard to be political. In his 1846 introduction to the book-length poem *Atta Troll*, he attacked the “vague, unfruchtbare Pathos” and “nutzlose Enthusiasmusdunst” of his contemporaries writing “sogennante politische Dichtkunst”¹⁶⁵ [the “unfruitful pathos” and “useless haze of enthusiasm” of “so-called political poetic art”]. Heine valorized prose critique over poetry in the political sphere, though he also had harsh words for the “unerträgliche Monotonie” [“unbearable monotony”] of Börne's essays.¹⁶⁶ Amid the post-Napoleonic era's revolutionary *and* reactionary banalities, Heine mourned the loss of a genuine cultural relationship to poetry, while in his own

¹⁶² Heinrich Heine, “Nachwort zum Romanzero,” 177.

¹⁶³ Pistiak, 8.

¹⁶⁴ Lawrence Kramer noted this phenomenon at the Words and Music Association Forum Conference, final meeting, Stockholm, 11 November 2012.

¹⁶⁵ Heinrich Heine, *Atta Troll*, Vorrede, in *Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritisch Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, Vol. 4, ed. Winfried Woesler, (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1985), 10.

¹⁶⁶ Heinrich Heine, *Ludwig Börne. Ein Denkschrift*, in *Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritisch Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, Vol. 11, ed. Helmut Koopmann (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1978), 96.

work he protected its status as an empty container for exactly this lost possibility.¹⁶⁷ In Book Five of *Ludwig Börne*, he laments the now-illegible status of true poetry:

Wer enträthselt diese Stimme der Vorzeit, diese uralten Hieroglyphen? Sie enthalten vielleicht keinen Fluch, sondern ein Rezept für die Wunde unserer Zeit! O wer lesen könnte! Wer sie ausspräche, die heilenden Worte, die hier eingegraben ... noch eine lange schmerzliche Zeit ... [K]ommen zunächst die Radikalen und verschreiben eine Radikalkur, die am Ende doch nur äußerlich wirkt, höchstens den gesellschaftlichen Grind vertreibt, aber nicht die innere Fäulnis. Gelänge es ihnen auch die leidende Menschheit auf eine kurze Zeit von ihren wildesten Qualen zu befreien, so geschähe das doch nur auf Kosten der letzten Spuren von Schönheit, die dem Patienten bis jetzt geblieben sind; häßlich wie ein geheilter Philister wird er aufstehen von seinem Krankenlager, und in der häßlichen Spitaltracht, in dem aschgrauen Gleichheitskostüm, wird er sich all sein Lebtag herumschleppen müssen. Alle überlieferte Heiterkeit, alle Süße, aller Blumenduft, alle Poesie wird aus dem Leben herausgepumpt werden, und es wird davon nichts übrig bleiben als die Rumfordsche Suppe der Nützlichkeit.¹⁶⁸

[Who decodes this voice of a former time, these ancient hieroglyphs? They may not hold a curse, but rather a prescription for the wound of our time! O who could read the expressions, the healing words, that are buried here ... still a long, painful time ... Next come the radicals and prescribe a radical culture that in the end only works outwardly, at most to peel away society's scab, but not its inner rot. If they were to succeed in freeing suffering mankind in a short time from its wildest pain, it would happen only at the cost of the last traces of beauty remaining to the patient; ugly as a cured philistine he will get up from his sickbed and, in the ugly hospital gown, in the ash-gray uniform, he will drag himself around, all the days of his life. All surviving exhilaration, everything sweet, all the fragrance of flowers, all poetry will be pumped out of life, and nothing will be left of it but the Rumford's soup of usefulness.]

I cite this passage at length for its bitterly elegiac tone, similar to that in the Louvre excerpt above, for its clarity about what Heine saw as literary emptiness, and for its problematizing of Heine's own political stance – his critique of revolutionary bluster no less biting than his distrust of monarchist politics, however elitist his own leanings.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Pfau, seminar lecture, Duke University, 17 March 2014.

¹⁶⁸ Heine, *Ludwig Börne*, 129.

¹⁶⁹ At the end of the passage cited above, Heine privileges beauty and genius as “eine Art Königthum” [“a kind of kingdom”] and goes on to observe that “sie passen nicht in eine Gesellschaft, wo jeder, im Mißgefühl der eigenen Mittelmäßigkeit, alle höhere Begabniß herabzuwürdigen sucht, bis aufs banale

All of this said, in Heine's own work – just as in Eisler's – art and politics are deeply entangled in each other. This chapter focuses mostly on “Die Tendenz,” to show the ways in which Eisler re-voices Heine's political parody for his own time. Heine's poem works against itself as poetry, sending up the false-voiced singing common to the “Junges Deutschland” movement, while at the same time making expert use of literary tropes and turns. The poem sends up “[d]ie falsche Vertretung ‘Deutscher Freiheit’” [“the false representation of ‘German freedom’”] after Friedrich Wilhelm IV had essentially annulled that freedom in 1840, by linking it explicitly with “Gehorsam” [“obedience”].¹⁷⁰ Gerhard Höhn notes that “Tendenzpoesie” was a polemical poetic genre with more bluster and less critical commentary than “Zeitgedichte” or “poetry of the time”; in Heine's parodic-satirical language “wird die leere Rhetorik der Tendenzpoesie noch rhetorisch übertroffen“ [the empty rhetoric of ‘Tendenz’ poetry is itself outdone rhetorically”].¹⁷¹ Here is the poem in Heine's form:

Deutscher Sänger! sing und preise
 Deutsche Freiheit, daß dein Lied
 Unsrer Seelen sich bemeistre
 Und zu Taten uns begeistre,
 In Marseillerhymnenweise.

Girre nicht mehr wie ein Werther,
 Welcher nur für Lotten glüht –
 Was die Glocke hat geschlagen
 Sollst du deinem Volke sagen,
 Rede Dolche, rede Schwerter!

Sei nicht mehr die weiche Flöte,
 Das idyllische Gemüt –
 Sei des Vaterlands Posaune,
 Sei Kanone, sei Kartaune,

Niveau” [“they do not fit in a society where everyone, uneasy with his own mediocrity, seeks to degrade every higher gift to the level of banality”]. Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Gerhard Höhn, *Heine-Handbuch* (Stuttgart and Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2004), 101.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 107.

Blase, schmettre, donnre, töte!

Blase, schmettre, donnre täglich,
Bis der letzte Dränger flieht –
Singe nur in dieser Richtung,
Aber halte deine Dichtung
Nur so allgemein als möglich.¹⁷²

[German singer! sing and praise
German freedom, that your song
Enthralls our souls
And excites us to action,
Like the Marseillaise.

No more cooing like Werther
Who only glows for Lotte –
What the bell has struck
You should utter to your people,
Speak daggers, speak swords!

Be no more the tender flute,
That idyllic disposition –
Be the fatherland's trumpet,
Be cannon, be the cannon royal,
Blow, blare, thunder, kill!

Blow, blare, thunder, kill each day,
Until the final hustler flees –
Only sing in this direction,
But declaim your poetry
Only as generically as possible.]

The poem functions at its most obvious level as a march, without the internal dotted rhythm its cited “Marseillaise” includes. Pounding trochaic tetrameter dominates, and yet a missing final unstressed beat, or a “stumbling” catalexis, in every second line (“Deutsche Freiheit, daß dein Lied”), announces and then destabilizes the poem’s drive. This catalexis can bear some comparison to the unexpected 2/4 bar in Eisler’s “Solidaritätslied” march; earnest as that later work is in its activist purpose, both marches counteract the tendency of regular 4/4 meter to

¹⁷² Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, Gedichte (Munich: Winkler-Verlag, 1969), 324.

entrain the body – especially the collective body politic – into kinetic obedience. Heine links these truncated lines with slant rhyme throughout the poem, as usual a master of the very craft he mocks, in excessive echoes such as “bemeistre/begeistre.” The poem includes not only the obvious Goethe allusion to Werther but also a play on the word “Dränger,” which can be translated as “hustler” but could also be read as “Sturm-und-Drang poet,” both terms likely directed at the eager German “Sänger” Heine distrusted. The poem’s comic collisions of “Werther”/“Schwerter” [“Werther”/ “swords”] and “Flöte/töte” [“flute”/ “kill”] send up both martial and idyllic language.¹⁷³ References to musical instruments recall the bitter wedding music parodied in Heine’s *Lyrisches Intermezzo* and set frenetically by Schumann (“Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen”) in the *Dichterliebe* cycle. There, too, the trumpet or trombone sounds as an unexpected menace, not simply because it blows and blasts but because it does so according to empty convention. Later, after reading a German translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the mid-1850s, Heine would imitate such sounds to particularly troubling effect in his satirical “Sklavenschiff” [“Slave Ship”] ballad. Long before the blaring of anthems at Nazi rallies, Heine understood and attacked, with perfect pitch, music’s too-easy appropriation in the service of collective zeal. The poem ends with a typically Heinian “Stimmungsbruch,” or tone-break, in this case an understated line that breaks the high-toned absurdity of “Richtung/Dichtung,” with a wry piece of advice to keep the poetry as dull as possible.

Most scholarship on Eisler’s “Tendenz” finds that it affirms Heine’s parodic stance; composer Cornelius Schwer’s argument that the chorus functions like the note attached to Woody Guthrie’s guitar (“This machine kills fascists”)¹⁷⁴ misses the music’s more discomfiting

¹⁷³ Ibid. and Höhn, 107.

¹⁷⁴ Schwer, 10.

point. Despite a tendency toward sweeping statements in his own pro-Communist writings, Eisler also shared Heine's favoring of particularity and complexity – a likely reason to choose the “problem” poet for his men's choruses, rather than a one-dimensional nineteenth-century political poet such as Georg Herwegh. The “we” of Heine's poem lends itself to complex choral setting in its shifting of subject-positions, from a call to nationalistic arms to the final “only as generically as possible” aside. This instability recalls Bakhtin's sense of polyglossia in parody, a language-contingency in which “it is not, strictly speaking, *I* who speak; I, perhaps, would speak quite differently,” creating a distancing effect.¹⁷⁵ This aspect of “Die Tendenz” also reflects the split lyric “I” typical in Heine's poetry, often coded in erotic terms.¹⁷⁶ Here, as in many ostensibly love-themed poems that end with Heine's “Stimmungsbruch,” the “we” appears as a musically and politically susceptible crowd throughout the overblown poem, until the final line, in which “they” reveal the speaker's cynicism. These voices' collective disavowal of lyric poetry contains its own double split, between poetry and politics generally, and between Sturm-und-Drang expressivity and the poetic emptiness Heine imitates. Such “multiple subject-positions” are also essential to the Brechtian *gestus*,¹⁷⁷ which Eisler would later underline in his catchy tunes set to troubling texts by Brecht. Rather than employing clear-cut juxtaposition in this way, however, his early Op. 10 choral work amplifies the grotesque aspect of Heine's poem, splitting

¹⁷⁵ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 65. Bakhtin is referring here to a special case of heteroglossia in Hellenistic culture; polyglossia relates to structures of power as manifest in more than one language, and to the ways in which “stylized discourse” can slip into a parodic stance. Thanks to Jørgen Bruhn for this clarification, 7 August 2014.

¹⁷⁶ Pfau, seminar lecture. The Berliner Ensemble's 2014 production *Denk ich an Deutschland in der Nacht...* adapts excerpts from Heine's *Buch der Lieder* and *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* as Liedertafel parody and polyvocal melodrama, showing how naturally his work reveals such contingency.

¹⁷⁷ See Fredric Jameson, “Persistencies of the Dialectic: Three Sites,” in *Dialectics for the new century*, ed. Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 128-129.

the “speaker” into four competing vocal lines, pushed to limits that begin to sound painful. This grotesquerie likely arouses more discomfort than empathy.¹⁷⁸ Philip Thomson’s definition of the grotesque, as “‘*the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response*,’”¹⁷⁹ allows for additional instability in an artwork.

“Tendenz” exemplifies Eisler’s interventionist adaptation – an act reserved for long-dead poets, not live collaborators like Brecht. By breaking apart nineteenth-century verse, Eisler not only subjects it to the pressures of his own time but also protests a “retrogressive” impulse in the Second Viennese School, the setting of high-toned “poetischen” language “meist aus verschlissenen Gefühlswelten herrührend”¹⁸⁰ [“poetic” language “mostly drawn from threadbare emotional worlds”]. Again, Eisler is associating terms like “poetisch” and “Gefühl” with empty sentimentality, not the critically active “Stimmung” his own music enacts. His choice to keep only the most “false” lines of Heine’s text, and to trust his own musical grotesquerie to say more than the cut lines could, shows the courage of a young composer in the breach between his formally stringent teacher and the politically fraught world he wanted to address. At the same time, his choice of a Liedertafel parody – that also functions satirically – shows his own formal savvy and Heinean insight, using bourgeois methods to puncture bourgeois forms.¹⁸¹ Eisler gives his “Tendenz” the aphoristic sub-title “Sangesspruch” [“song-saying”]. An early draft of his

¹⁷⁸ A similar form of exaggeration occurs in Eisler’s *Galgenlieder* and *Zeitungsausschnitte*, in which “[d]ie Grotesque schiebt sich im Moment des Vortrags zwischen den Notentext und die sängerische Empathie, wodurch die Interpretin zur Komplizin des Komponisten wird” [“the grotesque noses into the moment of presentation between the score and the singer’s empathy, through which the interpreter becomes an accomplice to the composer”]. Wißmann, 67-68.

¹⁷⁹ Philip Thomson, *The Grotesque* (London: Methuen, 1972), 27, italics Thomson’s, quoted in Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund. *Grotesque*, The New Critical Idiom Series (London: Routledge, 2013), 2.

¹⁸⁰ Betz, 50.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

text-fragmentation indicates a focus on the poem's less obviously satirical lines,¹⁸² suggesting that Eisler may have intended a serious revolutionary setting. The poem's complex parody won out, however, and Eisler eventually voiced and amplified Heine with paradoxical fidelity, for all his textual cuts and breaks. Juxtaposing the brazen nationalism of the first stanza and the deadly musical force of the last, Eisler's new text simplifies Heine's first stanza, re-orders two of its lines, and cuts the second and fourth stanzas entirely. He also cuts the poem's Goethe allusions, satirical reflexivity, and final understated twist ("Nur so allgemein wie möglich"). Without their musical dimension, the remaining two stanzas could be read either parodically or literally:

Deutscher Sänger! Sing und preise,
 daß dein Lied
 unsrer Seelen sich bemeistre
 in Marseillerhymnenweise.
 und zu Taten uns begeistre!

Sei nicht mehr die weiche Flöte,
 das idyllische Gemüt!
 Sei des Vaterlands Posaune,
 Sei Kanone, sei Kartaune,
 Blase, schmettre, donnre, töte!¹⁸³

Ending each stanza with an imperative, first to whip up enthusiasm and then to kill, Eisler cuts to the bone of Heine's parody. No longer a back-and-forth performance between gestic and allusive language, Eisler's "Tendenz" allows the baldly nationalist call to arms to speak for itself. The exclamation point in place of Heine's "Gedankenstrich" or dash (itself a tone-break between flute-idyll and Fatherland-trumpet) foregrounds the adapted poem's imperative stance even more brazenly. Heine's link between "Marseillaise"-like revolutionary song and German brass-and-canon bombast remains, another satirical gesture referring to 1840s

¹⁸² Hanns Eisler, *Drei Männerchore*, Op. 10, autograph draft of text, Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste Berlin, Hanns-Eisler-Archiv, Lauf. Nr. 1777, 1778.

¹⁸³ Hanns Eisler, *Drei Männerchöre*, Op. 10 (Austria: Universal-Edition, 1929), 1-4.

German political poets who appropriated the musical residue of a very different historical moment, merely to give their verse the illusion of “unmittelbar” or “immediate” urgency.¹⁸⁴ In the post-World-War-I context of Eisler’s setting, this appropriation can be read, beyond its surface-level revolutionary associations, as an ironic reference to German humiliation at Versailles. Eisler’s wordless citation of the “Internationale” also refers to the history of its text by Eugène Pottier (1816-1887), first sung to the tune of the “Marseillaise,”¹⁸⁵ and further destabilizes Heine’s poem, revealing that “[w]ährend die Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Bürgertum und Adel national noch andauern (Marseillaise), hat das Proletariat international gegen beide zu kämpfen”¹⁸⁶ [“[w]hile nationally the conflicts between bourgeoisie and aristocracy persist (‘Marseillaise’), internationally the proletariat must fight both”]. Radically simplifying “Die Tendenz” allows the music to do its own complex work in and around the words, making Heine’s point but in a more explosive and, at the same time, vulnerable way.

At the visual level, Eisler’s score looks both simple and forceful. In the first system, oversized common-time signatures loom over whole rests in the middle voices, printed to look almost hand-written, as a roughly fugue-like pattern emerges between first tenor and second bass. The tenors’ D-flat followed by the basses’ D-natural echoes a “heterophonic” tendency in Russian folk music, taken up in early twentieth-century Soviet political songs, in which *podgoloski* or “under-voices” complicate the main melody in close and even dissonant intervals of major and minor seconds.¹⁸⁷ This form of polyphony, framed as a fugue, also echoes

¹⁸⁴ Pistiak, 16.

¹⁸⁵ Lowry, 177.

¹⁸⁶ Betz, 58.

¹⁸⁷ Lowry, 195-196.

Bakhtin’s “centrifugal” movement of voices as noted in the novels of Dostoevsky; such scattering-outward of voices can also be read as a political act, a refusal of “sociopolitical and cultural centralization.”¹⁸⁸

Fig. 1.2



Eisler’s scoring also breaks open or outward at the visual level. Bold double strikes between systems disrupt the page. Dynamic markings in large font (“Marschmäßig,” “Vorwärts!” and “Mit größter Kraft!”¹⁸⁹ [“Marchlike,” “Forward!” and “With the greatest force!”]) alternate with more traditional tempo indications, growing in size with cumulative urgency. As the meter changes from 4/4 to 3/2 and back again on the last page, Eisler’s oversized, rhythmically unsettling time signatures, combined with fortissimo markings and accented quarter notes, read like an onslaught as the harmonic texture thickens. This exaggeration of size and font thickness is also a quality of the grotesque, in which boundaries of “standard type”¹⁹⁰ (in both senses here) are transgressed. Eisler is known for his quick writing tempo, “das Geschriebene also eine

¹⁸⁸ See Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 270-273.

¹⁸⁹ Eisler, *Drei Männerchöre*, 1-4.

¹⁹⁰ Edwards and Graulund, 67.

mögliche Version zu verstehen, die jederzeit revidiert werden kann¹⁹¹ [“the writing to be understood as a possible version that can be revised at any time”]; even the published score of his Heine choruses looks handwritten in its large time signatures and dynamic markings, giving them an improvisational quality. As Lawrence Kramer has noted, a musical score “is both code and image,”¹⁹² a kind of pictograph in tension between the performers’ apprehension and interpretation. In Eisler’s “Tendenz,” the sheer size and cumulative rush of visual markings carry satirical weight, overwhelming the staves with all the bluster of the political poets Heine detested, and all the nationalist zeal of the glee-club tradition Eisler meant to menace from within its very four-part form. The score itself reveals these choruses to be essentially gestic; though the term’s Brechtian implications are beyond this chapter’s scope, my close readings will show how clearly the music’s material charisma is coded by size and span.

Eisler took a flexible approach to the twelve-tone system in his Heine choruses. Tim Howell notes that “for Eisler the series was a pre-compositional construct” with which he could take liberties. He did not feel the need to “account for every note,” but rather worked economically with “source set[s],”¹⁹³ or groups of pitches he could map in intervallic relationships. From the first bars of his “Tendenz,” Eisler plays the “registral compass” of the tritone,¹⁹⁴ or augmented fourth, announcing his refusal of comfortable Hausmusik and Liedertafel harmonies. The tritone span, a dissonance so well-known *as* dissonance that it

¹⁹¹ Wißmann, 28.

¹⁹² Lawrence Kramer, “Rosetta Tones: The Score as Hieroglyph,” *Word and Music Studies* 14 [manuscript, 4].

¹⁹³ Tim Howell, “Eisler’s Serialism: Concepts and Methods,” in Blake, 106.

¹⁹⁴Ibid. 109.

functions as a signal in its own right,¹⁹⁵ is established right away on the word “Sänger,” in the first tenors’ plunge from D-flat to G-natural, with a second tritone a whole step higher in the next bar. This interval remains in tension, with more tritones following in the lower voices. The close intervals of Russian folk music, combined with the fugal movement noted above, create additional tension among the vocal lines. Eisler’s training in counterpoint is clear from the outset, as the second basses repeat the tenors’ words over silence in the middle voices, which then enter in rhythmic unison in the fourth bar, the music building from piano to mezzo forte. The song’s opening also announces, via tenor tessitura (dominant vocal range), the intensity and vulnerability it demands of the male voice. Singing at the edge of chest and head or falsetto resonance can give the tenor voice a strained quality; especially if asked to sing at high volume, the voice in that range can even “crack.” A near-octave leap on the word “preise” leads the first tenors to a sustained chromatic line at the top of the range, marked with a collapsing crescendo:

Fig. 1.3

Because the pitches in this range (high G-flat to A-flat) are difficult to sing without choosing either full voice or falsetto, an increasingly intense piano-marking asks the tenors to hover painfully on an upper passaggio, a register shift-point and site of literal vocal vulnerability.

Considering that the act of wailing or keening has traditionally worked as performative lament in

¹⁹⁵ Jacques Attali argues, via Adorno in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* and *Dissonanzen*, that dissonance itself functions as “the expression of the suffering of the exploited,” an expression held back by capitalism “until Schoenberg.” See Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 43.

many cultures, these sustained upper-range lines carry their own associative resonance. In addition, the nasal “n” in “dein” leading to a sustained “[i]” vowel on a high pitch require advanced vocal technique in order not to strain the voice. Already this song shows, in addition to its genre-level parody, aggressive protest against predictable chorale- or folksong-form, with dissonance, counterpoint, and sheer vocal difficulty.

In the song’s fourth system, a slowing crescendo leads to the “Marschmäßig” passage in which the first tenors pick up the “Marseillaise” reference begun in the lower voices and quote, both rhythmically and melodically, the opening of the “Internationale.” **Fig. 1.4**

Hit Marschmäßig

10 *f* *ff*

in Mar-seil-ler-hym-nen-wei-se

seil-ler-hym-nen-wei-se

seil-ler-hym-nen-wei-se

mei-sire in Mar-seil-ler-hym-nen-wei-se

While the Socialist anthem fills its 4/4 bars with dotted quarter and eighth notes, however, Eisler’s citation moves in heavy-footed half and quarter notes,¹⁹⁶ less a cheerful call to solidarity than a prolonged and pained recollection. Harmonically, this section moves from minor-second dissonance in all four parts (G-sharp against G-natural in the bass lines, staggered E-natural and F-natural in the tenor) to an E-flat minor chord in the “Internationale” citation, whose opening pitch actually belongs to its relative (G-flat) major. The quality of the third, in its binary (either major or minor) form associated with comfortable part-singing, reveals its actual instability,

¹⁹⁶ Eisler also cites the “Internationale” in his 1926 *Tagebuch* project, composed shortly before the Op. 10 choruses as a cantata-like argument with Schoenberg. See Betz, 50.

disorienting a familiar melody to the point that its recognition may register as a shock. The E-flat minor key also refers back to Eisler's early anti-war song "Der müde Soldat" ["The Tired Soldier"], composed in 1917 when he was an unwilling soldier himself. That Eisler associated this key with the suffering masses at war¹⁹⁷ is itself a key to understanding the element of mourning in his Heine settings. It may also indicate that his choice of male chorus was not simply genre parody but also a reflection of Weimar-era masculinity in its flight from collective shame in numbers, as Helmut Lethen suggests.¹⁹⁸

The harmonic ambiguity of the "Internationale" citation disintegrates further with a fluctuating C/C-flat in the next line, a four-part crescendo to fortissimo on the word "begeistre." Strangely, Eisler marks this climax "Pesante," a dynamic term for "heavy" or "depressing." The first tenors hold a high B-flat, well into the upper operatic or (depending on register change) falsetto range, before descending over heavy chromatic chords, including a split second-tenor bar in thirds, to a fermata-held D-flat augmenting a C-7 chord in the whole choir. This passage looks, and sounds, far more like a desperate cry falling thickly into irresolution than like an earnest, aggressive anthem, as Arnold Pistiak hears it.¹⁹⁹ Albrecht Betz's take on the song, as grotesque parody that nonetheless presses forward with revolutionary force – a received idea supported by text in Eisler's Op. 13 *Vier Stücke für gemischten Chor* claiming "'nothing to lose and a world to win,'"²⁰⁰ though this work appeared four years later – misses the element of desperation/depression as well. Traces of late nineteenth-century chromaticism, more present

¹⁹⁷ Haas and Krohn, 117.

¹⁹⁸ Lethen, 19-20.

¹⁹⁹ Pistiak, 20.

²⁰⁰ See Nikolaus Bacht, ed., *Music, Theatre and Politics in Germany, 1848 to the Third Reich* (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 275.

than Schoenbergian atonality in this passage, also lend it a quality of loss, though too stringently scored to convey mere sentimental nostalgia. That this passage yields to a piano-pianissimo diminuendo, also via thirds, on “Sei nicht mehr die weiche Flöte,” indicates a partly satirical and partly wistful – in the Heinean sense of a love-hate relationship to Romanticism – look back toward “idyllisches Gemüt.” Eisler’s use of major/minor third cells is typical of his work during the 1920s, in which the surface movement of intervallic relationships and their tonal ambiguities usually holds sway over systematic serialist mapping.²⁰¹ Eisler seems to listen backwards to the nineteenth century through his post-Schoenbergian ears, bending its familiar tropes from one harmonic instability to the next.

Not surprisingly, the composer’s early Soviet biographers found fault not only with his twelve-tone-inflected “formalist” tendencies but also with his music’s rhythmic instability.²⁰² Eisler’s bold-font “Vorwärts!” interrupts the quiet passage referring to the Goethean flute, with the second tenors blasting “Sei des Vaterlands Posaune” as the other voices follow, rhythmically echoing the “Internationale” again. The music breaks into 3/2 time on a long ritardando, exaggerating the rhyme on the word “Kartoune” and metrically refusing to sound like a march. This stumble in the song’s dominant duple rhythm anticipates the truncated bar in the “Solidaritätslied,” as even Eisler’s early music works to break the spell of collective entrainment, not only with metric disruption but also with more harmonic instability than is at first apparent in that iconic workers’ song.²⁰³ After this metric break, the second basses jolt chromatically to a

²⁰¹ Howell, in Blake, 106, 112.

²⁰² Lowry, 244-245.

²⁰³ Ibid. 266-267.

low F on heavily accented eighth notes – a percussive version of the Baroque “step of sorrow” or “lamento” passacaglia, coded as a public expression of mourning.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal ensemble, likely a choir. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the vocal parts, and the bottom two are for the piano accompaniment. The music is in 4/4 time, with a 3/2 time signature change in the second measure. The lyrics are in German and describe a lamentation. The score includes a 'Rit.' marking and various musical notations such as accents and slurs. The caption 'Fig. 1.5' is located at the bottom right of the image.

This descending pattern has a long history, one of its best-known manifestations in the “Crucifixus” section of Bach’s *B Minor Mass*. Though Eisler’s descent is not a complete “passus duriusculus” containing all the chromatic steps of a perfect fourth, it holds enough of the pattern to solidify associations with other predecessors, from “Dido’s Lament” in Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* to Chopin’s A-minor Mazurka Op. 17 No. 4. Eisler’s marginalia in the autograph score indicate his intention to foreground this lamentation trope throughout the Op. 10 choruses; in several cases he marks the passacaglia with a large, double-underlined “N.B.” or “*nota bene*.”²⁰⁴ In his use of a Baroque trope, Eisler was not only encoding the expression of sorrow but also referring back to a pre-individualist time in musical composition to write collective music.²⁰⁵

Returning to 4/4 time after just one metrically unsettling bar, the chorus sings in a tritone-inflected fortissimo, “Blase, schmettre, donnre, töte!” as all four parts strain to their upper transition-points and stay there, on a long fermata. The song ends on a double sforzando,

²⁰⁴ Hanns Eisler, *Drei Männerchore*, Op. 10, autograph score Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste Berlin, Hanns-Eisler-Archiv, Sign. 988.

²⁰⁵ Thanks to Eisler editor Johannes Gall for this insight, Talking Music Eisler Symposium, UNC Chapel Hill, 4 March 2016.

repeating the last phrase of text. This final phrase begins with two syncopated bars, a quarter rest before the chorus' entrance on the second beat, odd silences in a song ostensibly rushing into battle. As the second basses sing a slower "step of sorrow," after a huge jump from a low G to a high E-flat, the other voices hold the first syllable of "töte" at triple fortissimo, the first tenors on another painfully high B-flat, before dropping to a D-major chord on a quarter note. Three silent beats follow, before the song ends with the same word, broken by a rest, on a cluster of double major seconds. **Fig. 1.6**

Mit größter Kraft

The image shows a musical score for a vocal ensemble and piano. The title is "Mit größter Kraft". The score is in 2/4 time and features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "schmelze, donnre, tö - te! Tö - te!". The music is marked with dynamic instructions such as *sfz*, *ff*, and *fff*. The piano part includes a descending passacaglia in the bass line. The vocal parts feature sustained high notes and syncopated rhythms.

Despite its "Mit größter Kraft" marking, perhaps itself a parody of masculine aggression, the song's forceful ending is destabilized by rest-irruptions, sustained high notes, and a descending passacaglia. Eisler's later use of a similar bass-line passacaglia in his elegiac Nazi-era "An den kleinen Radioapparat" ["To the Little Radio"] indicates his awareness of its associative power. What could be read as "hardness" in the text's incitement to kill, and in the volume demanded of the male singers, is pushed to its grotesque edge, reifying male aggression to the point that this

very reification is exposed,²⁰⁶ and revealing vulnerability in the very intensity that refuses the “soft” flute of a lost poetic world.

To return to Helmut Lethen’s approach to masculinity in 1920s Germany, “[t]he ‘naked contemporary’ as drawn by the literature of the decade swings between extreme poles: between armoring and exposing; between fantasies of unbridled agency and pitiful creatureliness.”²⁰⁷ This creaturely vulnerability met resistance from right-wing “hardness culture” and, on the Left, from anti-Expressionist didacticism. In addition, proto-behaviorist Helmuth Plessner’s “hygiene of the soul” attempted to suppress what was commonly called, in early 1920s Berlin, the “scream of the creature.”²⁰⁸ In the arts, this leakage often occurred in the form of shock, or suddenness, which Karl Heinz Bohrer describes as “disturbing not only because it provokes us but also because of the up-to-now unknown aspect of what it expresses ... not a matter of ever more eccentric new eccentricities; it is a result of contents of consciousness that have not yet been processed.”²⁰⁹ The near-“scream” required of Eisler’s first tenors certainly works as a grotesque parody of glee-club singing, with its comfortable range and refusal of falsetto,²¹⁰ but it also conveys a “Stimmung” of psychic pain, revealing in a material way what German nationalism had cost, several years after the fact. Even as Eisler’s tenors parody the “Kollektivcaruso” bellowing he could not abide in many Weimar-era singing groups, an effect also notable in his

²⁰⁶ See Fredric Jameson on the *Verfremdungseffekt* as a “homeopathic method, in which reification is used to dereify and to bring change and new momentum to customary behavior and stereotypical ‘values.’” Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), 169.

²⁰⁷ Lethen, 23.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 81-85.

²⁰⁹ Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Suddenness: on the moment of aesthetic appearance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 78.

²¹⁰ Eichner, 205.

Op. 13 *Vier Stücke für gemischten Chor*,²¹¹ the song's power rests in this unresolved dialectic between forceful parody and vulnerability at the voice's breaking point. Gerhard Höhn's insight into the poem's dialectic can apply to its musical setting as well: "Die Selbstinstrumentalisierung der 'Sänger' wird zusammen mit ihrer objektiver Ohnmacht, im Widerspruch zur subjektiven Geste, verspottet"²¹² ["The self-instrumentalizing of the 'singers' is mocked, together with their objective helplessness, in contrast to the subjective gesture"]. In an ironic twist, Nazi men's choruses of the 1930s would disavow the "sentimental" Liedertafel tradition as vehemently as Eisler's Op. 10 music does; in 1934 Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg would issue a call "weg von der romantischen – und unpolitischen – Liedertafel, hin zur singenden Mannschaft!"²¹³ ["away with the romantic – and apolitical – glee club, on with the singing team!"], denying the very Teutonic-nationalist strain in the Liedertafel tradition that it would call up in pro-Hitler songs.

To the guillotine and into the fire

The second Heine poem Eisler chose for his three-chorus cycle appeared after the failed revolutions of 1848. As a particularly cynical take on past and future anti-monarchic upheaval, the poem failed to fit into Heine's lyric collections and was eventually published as part of his literary remains.²¹⁴ It bears the title "1649-1793 – ????" (not as puzzling as it appears once the poem is read to the end) but is usually anthologized under its first line, "Die Briten zeigten sich sehr rüde." Using a dry balladic tone to catalogue the demise of English and French monarchs, Heine imagines a German revolution, notable for its socially ingrained performative order:

²¹¹ Wißmann, 77.

²¹² Höhn, 107.

²¹³ Prieberg, 193-194.

²¹⁴ Pistiak, 23.

Die Briten zeigten sich sehr rüde
Und ungeschliffen als Regizide.
Schlaflos hat König Karl verbracht
In Whitehall seine letzte Nacht.
Vor seinem Fenster sang der Spott
Und ward gehämmert an seinem Schafott.

Viel höflicher nicht die Franzosen waren.
In einem Fiaker haben diese
Den Ludwig Capet zum Richtplatz gefahren.
Sie gaben ihm keine Calèche de Remise,
Wie nach der alten Etikette
Der Majestät gebühret hätte.

Noch schlimmer erging's der Marie Antoinette,
Denn sie bekam nur eine Charrette;
Statt Chambellan und Dame d'Atour
Ein Sansculotte mit ihr fuhr.
Die Witwe Capet hob höhnisch und schnippe
Die dicke habsburgische Unterlippe.

Franzosen und Briten sind von Natur
Ganz ohne Gemüt; Gemüt hat nur
Der Deutsche, er wird gemütlich bleiben
Sogar im terroristischen Treiben.
Der Deutsche wird die Majestät
Behandeln stets mit Pietät.

In einer sechsspännigen Hofkarosse,
Schwarzpanaschiert und beflort die Rosse,
Hoch auf dem Bock mit der Trauerpeitsche
Der weinende Kutscher – so wird der deutsche
Monarch einst nach dem Richtplatz kutschiert
Und untertänigst guillotiniert.²¹⁵

[The Britons proved quite rude
And as rough as regicide.
King Charles spent in Whitehall
His last, sleepless, night.
Before his window, mocking song
As his scaffolding was hammered into place.

The French were not much more polite.
They hauled Louis Capet in a fiacre

²¹⁵ Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, Gedichte (Munich: Winkler-Verlag, 1969), 798-799.

To the place of execution.
They gave him no horse-drawn carriage
As old etiquette demanded
For His Majesty.

Marie Antoinette had it even worse,
Since she got just a little cart;
Instead of chamberlain and lady-in-waiting
A sans-culotte rode with her.
She was lifted with a sneer
And a flick of the heavy Hapsburg underlip.

The Britons and French are by their nature
Wholly without character; this belongs
To the German, who stays in character
Even in his terroristic drive.
The German will treat royalty,
Always, with piety.
In a court coach-and-six

With black-draped, decorated steeds,
High on his seat with the whip of sorrow
The weeping coachman – so will the German
Monarch someday be escorted to the execution place
And obsequiously guillotined.]

While Arnold Pistiak finds in the poem a call to future *social* revolution, by violent means if necessary,²¹⁶ it reads more convincingly as a bitter critique of German subservience to authority.

This attitude is implied in the word “Gemüt,” which native speakers do not hear as directly

²¹⁶ Ibid. 24-27. Pistiak cites a passage in Heine’s 1853 “Waterloo” fragment in support of his argument: “[...] es wäre den Franzosen besser ergangen, wenn sie entschiedenen Bösewichtern in die Hände gefallen wären, die energisch und konsequent gehandelt und vielleicht viel Blut vergossen, aber etwas Großes für das Volk gethan hätten ...” [“it would have been better done by the French, if they had fallen into the hands of certain villains, who would have treated them energetically and firmly and even shed much blood, but had done something great for the people”]. This passage continues with a slightly tongue-in-cheek reference to what great crimes can do for “guten Leute und schlechten Musikanten” [“good people and bad musicians”] who solemnize such crimes in their ambition, a reminder that Heine is never entirely serious when he promotes acts of violence. See “Waterloo. Fragment,” in *Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritisch Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, Vol. 15, ed. Gerd Heinemann, (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1982), 190.

linked to the word “gemütlich” or “comfortable,” but which is morphologically related,²¹⁷ as it is to “gemütvoll,” usually translated as “soulful” or “warm-hearted.” The poem’s revolutionary tales are partly “scaffold” in themselves, support for the last stanza’s explosion of what passes for mourning and humility, in Heine’s continuing exposure of an emptied-out affective landscape. Certainly Heine had reason to hope for a more successful revolution than the failures of 1848, but his poetic instincts were too piercing for progressive certainty. Eisler’s decision to set only the last two stanzas, referring to the German “in character” even in his “terroristic drive,” reflects his own incisive sense of the poem. In keeping with the first song’s intense parody of nationalistic choruses, this setting – ironically titled “Utopie” – pushes the word “Gemüt” to a painful limit.

Besides removing the poem’s scaffold by cutting the first two stanzas entirely, and altering several prepositions and conjunctions, Eisler makes what appears to be a significant change to Heine’s word “terroristic.” The new line reads “sogar beim Aufruhrreiben,”²¹⁸ meaning “even in the drive toward uproar/riot/insurrection.” On the surface, this change gives a positive connotation to what might read as a pejorative term in Heine’s poem. The two terms may not be so distant, however, if Arnold Mindell’s definition of the terrorist is taken into account: a “ghost role ... a spirit of the times when there is need of cultural change but it is blocked.”²¹⁹ Eisler may be voicing, in more contemporary terms, the spirit of the oppressed that Heine catalogs with his biting post-St.-Simonian ambivalence (Brecht would later use the word

²¹⁷ Thanks to Andreas Aurin for this clarification, Berlin, 6 July 2014.

²¹⁸ Eisler, *Drei Mannerchöre*, 5.

²¹⁹ Arnold Mindell, *Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation using Conflict and Diversity* (Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press, 1995), 89-90.

“Aufruhr” in his 1939 elegy “An die Nachgeborenen,” also set by Eisler²²⁰). In 1925 Eisler was still balanced on the hinge between postwar trauma and hope for a new social order, several years before the Nazis would introduce a “terroristic drive” more akin to what Heine had predicted in his *History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (“Es wird ein Stück aufgeführt werden in Deutschland, wogegen die französische Revolution nur wie eine harmlose Idylle erscheinen möchte”²²¹ [“A play will be performed in Germany that will make the French Revolution appear as a harmless idyll.”]). Even if Eisler did not see his “Utopie” explicitly as a warning, his music may carry traces of the tension and dread in the air after Hitler’s release from prison in 1924 and reformulation of the National Socialist party in 1925. If read as an indictment of German obsequiousness toward authority, the song’s relevance in light of the not-so-distant Nazi future is chilling, though of course no ritual execution of the Reich’s leaders, those very figures who began by seeing themselves as “oppressed,” would occur. Pistiak sees in this song a “desillusionierten Rückblick” [“disillusioned look back”] to missed opportunities, after the 1918-19 abolition of monarchy in Eisler’s native Austria and in Germany; despite the establishment of the new Republic, many old hierarchies remained unchanged.²²² Does this chorus imply that the Germans were simply too polite to do away with monarchs in one violent sweep – in Albrecht Betz’s terms, that this “entscheidende Schritt ... scheitert noch immer an mangelnder Tatkraft

²²⁰“In die Städte kam ich zu der Zeit der Unordnung/ Als da Hunger herrschte./ Unter die Menschen kam ich zu der Zeit des Aufruhrs/ Und ich empörte mich mit ihnen.” [“In the cities I came, in the time of disorder/ when hunger ruled./ I came among the people in the time of uprising/ and revolted with them.”] Bertolt Brecht, *Werke*, Band 12, *Gedichte 2* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag and Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), 86.

²²¹ Heinrich Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, in *Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritisch Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, Vol. 8.1, ed. Manfred Windfuhr (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1979), 119.

²²² Pistiak, 27.

und sentimentalischer Ehrfurcht“²²³ [this “decisive step ... still stumbles on wavering agency and sentimental reverence for authority”]? Or is more at stake in the tension between text and music? Perhaps Eisler’s attraction to the text had something to do with his break with the “Monarchisten Schönberg”²²⁴ in addition to larger political concerns. Eisler left no notes on his choice of this poem, nor are there secondhand reports; my close reading of the score will attempt to tease apart its tensions.

Like the song “Tendenz,” “Utopie” meets the eye first with oversized time signatures that change frequently from duple to triple and sometimes asymmetrical (5/4) meter. The song’s andante tempo marking and frequent, very small “dolce” notations contrast with larger-font “Gemessen” [“measured/grave”] and “Pesante” [“heavy”] markings,²²⁵ as the song moves from quiet melisma to more declarative text-setting. In overall sonority, this song works dialectically against “Tendenz” in its slow, quiet movement and mock-sweetness. Eisler continues to exploit the tritone, but this time at the more subtle harmonic level, often in passing tones between the first and second tenors. Most notable at the song’s outset are the repetition of the word “Gemüt” in a low-bass growl marked pianissimo, each utterance separated by an eighth-rest fermata, and the first tenors’ melodic opening on a rising minor sixth, evocative of such Bach openings as “Ich habe genug” in Cantata no. 82 and the alto aria “Erbarme dich” in the *St. Matthew Passion*. Both Heine and Eisler critiqued the German cultural tradition – Heine because of its emptied-out vocabulary, even as he used this very language in critique, and Eisler because of the received canon’s potential for political disengagement and commodification, even as he paid homage to

²²³ Betz, 58.

²²⁴ Albrecht Dümling, “Hanns Eisler und Arnold Schönberg,” in Günter Mayer, ed., *Hanns Eisler der Zeitgenosse: Positionen – Perspektiven*. Materialien zu den Eisler-Festen 1994/95 (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1997), 33.

²²⁵ Eisler, *Drei Mannerchöre*, 6, 8.

Bach and Brahms throughout his oeuvre. “Utopie” echoes both composers’ formal tendencies: its melodic leaps, fugue-like passages, and triple meters recall Bach, and its gentle chorale bars alternating with speech rhythm carry traces of Brahms’ *Deutsches Requiem*. Even the “sogar beim Aufruhr-treiben” phrase mentioned above is set as a chorale-like passage, still marked “piano” and “dolce.” The phrase begins on an F dominant seventh chord, usually sounding before a chord progression resolves in traditional harmonic practice, and often signaling tension or longing in nineteenth-century music. The passage ends on a clashing two-octave span (G-flat to G natural), with an internal tritone between the first basses and second tenors.

Fig. 1.7

The image shows a musical score for a vocal passage. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the soprano and alto voices, and the bottom two are for the tenor and bass voices. The lyrics are written below the notes. The lyrics are: "blei - ben so - gar beim Aufruhr - trei - ben. Der müt - lich blei - ben so - gar beim Aufruhr - trei - ben. Der blei - ben so - gar beim Aufruhr - trei - ben." The music is in a 3/4 time signature and features a mix of quarter and eighth notes, with some melisma on the word "blei".

After the passage above, an attempted crescendo on the word “Majestät,” sung melodically in the two middle voices, returns quickly to a “pp dolce” whisper. This reverent atmosphere continues even into the more declarative middle section, in which the second basses, dropping to the bottom of their range, introduce the “In einer sechsspännigen Hofkalesche” line. The song’s only forte marking occurs on the unlikely word “untertänigst,” [“obsequiously”], on a plunging line before the syncopated, accented piano of “gouillotiniert.” The final syllable rests on another F dominant seventh chord, swelling to sforzando before abruptly breaking off (“abreißen”). This loud, unresolved chord gives the impression of a question shouted into the air, rather than a strongly articulated statement. Finally the basses – profundo, with an alternate line if this depth

proves unreachable – lightly touch the syllables of “gouillotiniert” once more, on a descending passacaglia echoing the lament-pattern in “Tendenz”:

Fig. 1.8

The image shows a musical score for four voices and piano accompaniment. The top three staves are vocal parts, each with the marking "(falsett) PPP" and the lyrics "Ge - müt.". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, marked "PPP", with the lyrics "gouil - lo - ti - niert" written below it. The score is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The piano part features a descending melodic line.

The upper three voices follow with a triple-pianissimo, falsetto “Gemüt” marked, almost impossibly, diminuendo.²²⁶

According to Albrecht Dümling, Eisler’s use of the dominant seventh chord ironizes the idea of German revolution through one of the most typically exploited “Mittel musikalischer Gefühllichkeit” [“means of musical sentiment”] in the Liedertafel tradition. I suspect that Eisler’s repeated use of seventh chords in “Utopie” both mocks that tradition *and* flies in the face of his former teacher’s twelve-tone austerity. Pistiak asks for what he calls a Mozartean reading, as an attempt to hold two opposites with the same root: “groteske satirische Kritik an dem ‚Gemütvollen‘, an politikfernem Verhalten einerseits, andererseits den als Gewissheit vorgetragenen Glauben, dass es auch in der Zukunft grundsätzliche gesellschaftliche Veränderungen geben werde”²²⁷ [“grotesque satirical critique of the ‘warm-hearted,’ of apolitical

²²⁶ Eisler, *Drei Mannerchöre*, 8.

²²⁷ Pistiak, 29.

demeanor on the one hand, and, on the other, of the belief declaimed as certainty that in the future fundamental social changes would occur.”]. Eisler’s music actually links back to “Tendenz” with the word “Gemüt” (in that case, the line “Sei nicht mehr die weiche Flöte, das idyllische Gemüt”²²⁸), the one quiet passage in the cycle’s opening chorus. The flute-like “Stimmung” of male falsetto and pianissimo throughout “Utopie” certainly parodies the fetishized sweetness of German bourgeois musical culture, but the first song critiques the very voices that refuse that “soft” tradition. In a time of right-wing valorization of “hardness,” this gentle “Stimmung” voices both the danger of sentimentality and the problem of genuine vulnerability after collective trauma. With this connection to the first song in mind, it is difficult to reduce the dynamic effect of “Utopie” to satirical grotesquerie, two-pronged though its target might be in Pistiak’s reading. Eisler’s voices seem caught in a cultural mode of expression they cannot escape, sending up the very sounds Weimar-era “coolness” and “hardness” would forbid. This push-pull between satire and charisma can be read dialectically but also signals the practical tug-of-war Eisler faced throughout his life, as a politically committed composer whose music leaned toward formal beauty every time he set a text, however fragmented.

At the textual level, the third Heine poem set by Eisler, “Der Wechselbalg” [“The Changeling”] works as pure political grotesquerie. Usually seen as an anti-Prussian allegory, it attacks not only the entrenched German military system but also the regime’s claims to legitimacy under Friedrich Wilhelm IV,²²⁹ a conservative-Romantic who saw himself carrying on the legacy of the Holy Roman Empire. Part of the *Zeitgedichte* collection written several

²²⁸ Eisler, *Drei Mannerchöre*, 3.

²²⁹ Pistiak, 31.

years before the abortive 1848 revolution, the poem takes what appears to be a rare stance in Heine: a bald call to destroy what could translate associatively as a “mis-born monster”:

Ein Kind mit großem Kürbiskopf,
Hellblondem Schnurrbart, greisem Zopf,
Mit spinnig langen, doch starken Ärmchen,
Mit Riesenmagen, doch kurzen Gedärmchen –
Ein Wechselbalg, den ein Korporal,
Anstatt des Säuglings, den er stahl,
Heimlich gelegt in unsre Wiege –
Die Mißgeburt, die mit der Lüge,
Mit seinem geliebten Windspiel vielleicht,
Der alte Sodomiter gezeugt –
Nicht brauch ich das Ungetüm zu nennen –
Ihr sollt es ersäufen oder verbrennen!²³⁰

[A child with giant pumpkin-head,
Bright-blonde mustache, and powdered plait,
With spinning little arms, both long and strong,
With giant belly yet short little innards –
A changeling, whom a corporal,
In place of the suckling child he stole,
Secretly laid in our cradle –
The freak whom the old sodomite sired
With a lie,
Perhaps with his beloved whippet –
I don't need to name the monster –
You should drown or burn it up!]

The poem's straightforward end-rhymed couplets and songlike four-beat lines appear as a closed system, leaving little room for formal play or tonal shift. Albrecht Betz holds that “Heine, der einen Monarchen als Person und Repräsentanten angreift, benützt – ganz in der Tradition der Aufklärung – die moralische Denunziation”²³¹ [“Heine, who views a monarch as a person and representative – very much in the Enlightenment tradition – uses moral denunciation”]. Hans-Georg Kemper sees hermetic knowledge used allegorically in the poem, one of several cases of

²³⁰ Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, Gedichte (Munich: Winkler-Verlag, 1969), 326.

²³¹ Betz, 59.

false impregnation in Heine's work, this time occurring in a demonic sense.²³² Eisler picks up this aspect of the poem in his textual re-working; he replaces the "sodomite" reference with his own Goethean allusion, "die Spottgeburt aus Dreck und Feuer"²³³ ["the monstrosity from filth and fire"], referring to Faust's insult when Mephistofeles accuses him of being led by the nose by a young girl. Here is Eisler's textual adaptation, which makes broad cuts, adds a line about the "sweetest opportunity for treason" (breaking the rhyme pattern completely) and refers to the "changeling" as having "bewitched" the citizens who treasure it to disastrous degree:

Ein Kind mit großer Kürbiskopf,
mit blondem Schnurrbart, greisem Zopf,
mit spinnig langen, doch starken Ärmchen,
mit Riesenmagen, doch kurzen Gedärmchen;
die schönste Gelegenheit zum Verrat!

Der Wechselbalg, der uns bezaubert hat,
die Spottgeburt aus Dreck und Feuer,
die allen Bürgern unselig teuer,
Nicht brauch' ich das Ungetüm zu nennen!
Ihr sollt es ersäufen!
Ihr sollt es verbrennen!²³⁴

[A child with giant pumpkin-head,
with blonde mustache and powdered plait,
with spinning little arms, both long and strong,
with giant belly yet short little innards:
sweetest opportunity for treason!

The changeling who's bewitched us,
monstrosity from filth and fire,
treasured by the citizens, deplorably,
I don't need to name the creature!

²³² Hans-Georg Kemper, "'Muse, edle Nekromanten': Zu Heines poetischer Magie und ihrem hermetischen Kontext," in Dietmar Goltschnigg, Charlotte Grollegg-Edler, and Peter Revers, Eds., *Harry ... Heinrich ... Henri ... Heine: Deutscher, Jude, Europäer* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2008), 168.

²³³Eisler, *Drei Mannerchöre*, 11. See also Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust, Erster Teil*, (Leipzig: Insel, 1956), 232.

²³⁴ Ibid. 9-12.

You should drown it!
You should burn it!]

These changes foreground the ruler(s)' success at duping the German people. According to Pistiak's model, this, like the other songs in Op. 10, looks back at the only superficially successful 1918/19 revolution and also relates to Eisler's wartime service in the Austrian army, aligned with the Prussian military machine.²³⁵ Eisler's title for the adapted poem is "Demokratie" in quotation marks, not surprising in light of Pistiak's reading. The editorial note "nicht zu schnell" ["not too fast"] just underneath the title may indicate a touch of ironic humor as well.²³⁶ Betz sees Eisler's adaptation targeting the monarchist president of the Weimar Republic, Paul von Hindenburg, as well as a settlement being negotiated in 1925 to restore Hohenzollern estates using public funds.²³⁷ Once again, a close reading of the musical score complicates these plausible but incomplete views.

"Demokratie" swings between melismatic passages and speechlike lines in all four parts. The continually overlapping, fugue-like entrances, with frequent minor-second collisions, create a sense of muttered gossip that underlines the polyvocality and multiplicity of subject-positions in Heine's work. This unsettling chatter also questions the ironic stance of Eisler's title, indicating a proletariat with actual human voices speaking up for change, however hopeless that prospect in 1920s Berlin, on the brink of fascist dictatorship after one "revolution" that had left much unchanged. Wide variation between loud and soft (e.g. the word "teuer" marked forte for the first basses and piano for the other three parts, followed by an almost-whispered repetition of the word) adds to this chattering pressure that explodes on the triple-sforzando final chord, also

²³⁵ Pistiak, 32.

²³⁶ Thanks to Thomas Pfau for this observation, Berlin, 7 July 2014.

²³⁷ Betz, 58.

including a minor second within a perfect fifth on the word “verbrennen!”²³⁸ Yet another “step of sorrow” figure appears in this last line, now in the second tenor part, performing a lament for both the past and future.

Fig. 1.9

The image shows a musical score for a vocal ensemble, likely a choir or quartet. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the first tenors and second tenors, and the bottom two are for the first basses and second basses. The lyrics are: "bren - nen! Ihr sollt es ver - bren - nen! Ihr sollt es ver - bren - nen!". The score includes performance markings such as "Pesante", "p", "ff", "sfz", and "monocresc.". A box with the number "35" is in the top left corner. The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature.

As in “Tendenz,” the song’s last page demands extreme high notes, not only of the first tenors, sustaining forte G-sharps and a high B, but also of the basses, who sing loud, accented C- and D-sharps (difficult transitional notes for most voices in that range) on the line “Ihr sollt es ersäufen!”²³⁹ That the final bars are marked “pesante” with a partial descending passacaglia in the top three voices is not surprising, after Eisler’s use of this lamentation-trope in the two previous songs, but why does it occur here, at the end of what might otherwise read as a call to right, without any “gemütvoll” gentility, the wrongs of the past? Again, a look back to “Tendenz” is helpful, to see Eisler’s use of aggressively coded volume and accent to mock aggressiveness itself, while the “step of sorrow” repeatedly undermines the blustering call to kill. Could it be that Heine’s poem is not the straightforward allegory it appears to be, but rather

²³⁸ Eisler, *Drei Mannerchöre*, 12.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

another sendup of tone-deaf political poetry, for all Heine's alignment with anti-Prussian sentiment? This reading likely reaches too far, but the Heine poems certainly critique three aspects of German socio-political affect: nationalist bluster, sentimental servility, and enthrallment to false authority. Eisler's music adds an element of despair even to this final, damning chorus, relating it back to "Tendenz" through painfully high tessitura, strangely placed "Pesante" markings, and an anti-climactic descending passacaglia. This last song works as an aborted wish for justice in a society Eisler knew to be unjust, despite his activist drive. He was still too close to the war hospital and to Berlin's crippled and widowed population, and still too close to the revolutionary failures of 1918/19, to write the kind of measured Kampflieder that would win his music popularity in the late 1920s. This final chorus distances itself from bald political furor by making that furor sound ridiculous in its loudness, all-too-human in its vocal strain and nervous chatter, and ultimately defeated in its attempt to whip up collective violence.

Cross-reading and conclusion

As many affect-theory scholars have noted, emotion is contagious and finds whatever portals it can through which to move.²⁴⁰ These portals can occur in artworks at the material level, particularly in the gaps between a parody and its object and between that text and its adaptations – however intentional, or not, affective leakage is on the part of the author or composer. Eisler's adaptations of Heine, radical in their textual cuts but congruent with Heine's favoring of complexity, allow for an expression of still incompletely processed postwar trauma in mid-1920s Berlin. With registral and dynamic extremes, juxtaposed against Eisler's repeated

²⁴⁰ The idea of affective contagion is not new, from David Hume's 1740 *Treatise of Human Nature* to Deleuze's view, in his writing on Spinoza, of the subjective as a tissue of affective contagion, and Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of communication as contagion in *The Inoperative Community*. See Thomas Pfau, *Romantic Moods*, 2-3, and Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

use of the Baroque “step of sorrow” passacaglia, the Op. 10 choruses work in an unresolved dialectic of aggressive parody and collective lament. The expression of masculine mourning works not in the cathartic sense Brecht would later associate with “culinary” theater, but rather in the sense of a critical “Stimmung” that illuminates the stakes in parodic language adapted for a new historical moment. This complex dialectic also reflects Eisler’s pressurized position, even as a young composer, between Socialist engagement and creative responsiveness to text.

Reading back into the Heine poems, following Jørgen Bruhn’s model of a two-way adaptation dialogue in which source and response work as “results” of one another,²⁴¹ the *lack* of masculine vulnerability is clear at the textual level – up to the Goethe allusions Eisler cut from “Die Tendenz.” Though the poem’s “hard” parodic voices refuse Werther’s cooing and glowing, as well as the “soft” flute idyll in the next stanza, reading the poem through Eisler’s interventionist setting reveals the lost poetic world Heine’s text evokes *through* parodic rejection. The banality of these revolutionary-nationalist voices is not the same as Eisler’s relentless post-war hollering and keening; at the same time, hearing the poem in its musical fragmentation allows it to mediate those voices with melancholy, from the Goethean allusions to the final line, “Nur so allgemein wie möglich.”²⁴² These lines also recall the melancholic passages in Heine’s prose, from his encounter with the Venus de Milo in the Louvre, on the brink of his own creaturely collapse, to his frequent laments over the lack of attunement to poetry. Thomas Pfau has pointed out that melancholy is not mere solitary suffering but rather a position from which the individual can critique the very social-cultural constructions that situate that state; in the case of Heine, “the restoration age can legitimately be seen as a period of

²⁴¹ Bruhn, “Dialogizing adaptation studies,” in Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, eds., *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 69-88.

²⁴² Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, Gedichte (Munich: Winkler-Verlag, 1969), 324.

extended mourning for political and social opportunities that were either being foreclosed or had been altogether missed.”²⁴³ The material traces of lament in Eisler’s first chorus re-contextualize it in a period not only of political disillusionment but also collective masculine shame after a catastrophic war, bringing the traces of critical “Stimmung” in Heine’s words more obviously to light. That Eisler achieves this through radical cuts to the text is in fact what allows for such discomfiting mood or atmosphere to surface. As Adorno notes in his *Ästhetische Theorie*,

Die Kunstwerke aber gelangen, die von dem Amorphem, dem sie unabdingbar Gewalt antun, in die Form, die als abgespaltene es verübt, etwas hinüberretten. Das allein ist das Versöhnliche an der Form. Die Gewalt jedoch, die den Stoffen widerfährt, ist der nachgeahmt, die von jenen ausging und die in ihrem Widerstand gegen die Form überdauert.²⁴⁴

[Yet these artworks succeed that rescue over into form something of the amorphous to which they ineluctably do violence. This alone is the reconciling aspect of form. The violence done to the material imitates the violence that issued from the material and that endures in its resistance to form.²⁴⁵]

A reading back into Heine’s second poem set by Eisler, “Die Briten zeigten sich sehr rüde,” gives the final stanza the most weight, with its exposure of German submission to authority. As noted above, the stanzas about French and English revolutionary violence now appear less about comparative history and more as scaffolding to set up a critique of German social “Gemüt.” This word, neutral in itself, holds both the lost “idyllic” potential in “Die Tendenz” and the comfortable disposition that prevents true German revolution. Hearing Eisler’s exaggerated pianissimo setting of “Gemüt” in this second chorus opens a “hermeneutic

²⁴³ Pfau, *Romantic Moods*, 389.

²⁴⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 50.

²⁴⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 80-81.

window”²⁴⁶ back into the first song, also opening the question of what is being mocked and mourned at once. In light of “softness”-shaming in 1920s Berlin, Heine’s prose words about the “floral scent” lost to poetry in his own era,²⁴⁷ which favored its own kind of “hardness” in tone-deaf political language and emptied-out poetic speech, resonate more clearly. A reading back into the third poem, set by Eisler as “Demokratie,” juxtaposes this new title ironically with Heine’s grotesque depiction of Friedrich Willhelm IV and his progeny, the “old ghosts”²⁴⁸ of German monarchy haunting the Weimar Republic. The muttering texture of Eisler’s setting, combined with the partial “step of sorrow” in its final passages, give Heine’s pre-text a more polyvocal resonance, a more contingent collective complaint, marked not only with angry sarcasm but also with pain at the failure of revolutionary hopes. As Peter von Matt has observed, Heine’s poetry tends to open itself to such subject-position instability,²⁴⁹ heard more clearly in this poem by way of Eisler’s four-part muttering. The violent cuts between pre-and post-text allow these material elements to spill in both directions, not only in the form of “*symbolic material*,” as Bakhtin describes in the movement between “images of various art forms”²⁵⁰ but also in terms of voice and tone as manifestations of “*Stimmung*.” This occurs first on the page, in

²⁴⁶ Kramer, *Interpreting Music*, 25.

²⁴⁷ Heine, *Ludwig Börne*, 129.

²⁴⁸ Gay, 10.

²⁴⁹ “Die Frage nach dem Subjekt, das darin spricht und wünscht, wird zur Frage, wieweit dieses Subjekt in seinem Sprechen nichts bereits von anderen Instanzen gesprochen wird und ob sich dabei nicht noch weitere Gestalten des Sprechens überlagern” [“The question of the subject that speaks and wishes becomes the question of how far this subject, in its speaking, is not already being spoken in other instances, and whether other speech-forms do not superimpose themselves on it”], in Peter von Matt, “Wünscht Heine sich den Tod? Die Unfaßbarkeit des Ichs im lyrischen Text,” in Peter von Matt, *Die verdächtige Pracht: Über Dichter und Gedichte* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1988), 209.

²⁵⁰ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 184-185.

Eisler's cutting of text and mediating the remaining or altered words with musical material (the "production process"), and then in the performers' and listeners' participation in the "reception process,"²⁵¹ which embodies the works' physical charisma.

In order to contextualize my two-way readings of Eisler's Op. 10 choruses, this chapter has outlined the conflicting political, cultural, and aesthetic field in which Eisler worked in mid-1920s Berlin. A period of fragile economic stability and the lifting of censorship allowed for artistic experimentation. Tensions between right- and left-wing factions (and between Socialist and Communist branches on the left) became apparent in German choral culture, with its own nationalist/revolutionary history and engagement with notions of militant masculinity. Conflict between "bourgeois" musical formalism and activist "music for use" was further complicated by what Eisler saw as the entertainment aspect of "Gebrauchsmusik," not to mention his own musically challenging compositions that drew on canonical materials even as they worked to further the class struggle. Finally, Weimar-era "coolness" culture, privileging male-coded hardness over the vulnerability of war cripples, and the effects of what we now call post-traumatic stress, led to expressions of bodily fragility in art forms ranging from postwar painting to Eisler's male choruses. With its material elements of "Stimme" and "Stimmung," music in particular embodied the "Spannungszustand zwischen Hoffnung und Horror" ["field of tension between hope and horror"] in the period between the two World Wars, manifesting as a "Kräftefeld, in dem Fragen der Macht, Ohnmacht und des Widerstandes [*sic*], der Hoffnungen und Leiden von Krieg und Besatzung ausgehandelt wurden"²⁵² ["a field of forces in which questions of power, powerlessness and resistance, of the hopes and sorrows of war and

²⁵¹ Bruhn, "Dialogizing adaptation studies," 73-74.

²⁵² Sarah Zalfen and Sven Oliver Müller, eds., *Besatzungsmacht Musik: Zur Musik- und Emotionsgeschichte im Zeitalter der Weltkriege (1914-1949)* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012), 24, 28.

occupation were negotiated”]. If, as Aristotle believed, “the voice is an animal category,” and if, as Nietzsche maintained, the “most endangered” human animal developed speech to voice “distress,”²⁵³ the endangered postwar male creature had every reason to cry out. That such a cry would erupt out of a male chorus parodying the very nationalist zeal that had led German soldiers to war in the decade before, and that these voices would repeat an old musical form of lament, has not been noted before but is difficult to miss in close readings of Eisler’s score. This vocal rupture with the past may lead the chorus forward into new revolutionary possibility, but only through the critical “Stimmung” that exposes “all the sediment of corrupt social voices, of bad habits inherited from bad history.”²⁵⁴ Only a setting that responds to Heine’s own “rifts and cracks,”²⁵⁵ which the poet saw not as ontological or metaphysical but deeply embedded in historical, socio-political conditions,²⁵⁶ can disturb that sediment. Eisler’s dramatic cuts to the poems he set in Op. 10 confirm, paradoxically, his fidelity to the material he adapted. Through Heine’s tone-breaks and through a series of gaps between his texts and their satirical objects, between poetry and musical setting, and between score and performance, Eisler’s conflicted settings amplify Heine’s voice for Weimar Germany, a voice both parodic and pained.

²⁵³ See Lawrence Kramer, “The Voice of/in Opera,” in Walter Bernhart and Lawrence Kramer, eds., *On Voice*, Word and Music Studies 13 (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2014), 48-49. Mladen Dolar relates the creaturely voice to Giorgio Agamben’s “bare life” in its paradoxical inside-outside relationship to the *polis*. See Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), Chapter 5, par. 5, Kindle Edition. See also Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 15-16: “How does the bare life inhabit *polis*? The living being possesses *logos* by suppressing and retaining it in its own voice, just as it inhabits *polis* by letting its own bare life be ex-cepted by it.”

²⁵⁴ For a discussion of the ethics of voice, see Mladen Dolar, Chapter 4, par. 8, Kindle Edition.

²⁵⁵ Axel Englund, “The Mahlerian Mask: On Heine’s Voice and Visage in Post-War Germany,” in Bernhart and Kramer, 134.

²⁵⁶ See Wolfgang Preisendanz, “Der Funktionsübergang von Dichtung und Publizistik bei Heine,” in H. R. Jauß, ed., *Die nicht mehr schönen Künste: Grenzphänomene des Ästhetischen. Poetik und Hermeneutik*, Arbeitsergebnisse einer Forschungsgruppe III (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1968), 371.

CHAPTER 2

MUSIC TO BREAK THE CURSE: HÖLDERLIN IN HOLLYWOOD

Für Hölderlin gab es weder in Deutschland noch außerhalb Deutschland eine Heimat.

[For Hölderlin there was no homeland, either in or out of Germany.]

Georg Lukács, “Hölderlins *Hyperion*”²⁵⁷

Introduction

An uneasy relationship to homeland marks Hölderlin’s poetry as much as it does Hanns Eisler’s 1940s songs, six of which are set to the poet’s words. Though Hölderlin never ventured long from his German home, his early 1800s odes voice painful tension between near and far, and between utopian vision and outsider melancholy. Eisler’s music exposes and amplifies these faultlines in the Hölderlin poems he set, from a more literal and politically urgent state of exile. This chapter traces the composer’s journey before treating the better-known poet’s work and twentieth-century reception.

Eisler’s exile took many turns before landing him in the Los Angeles area during the Second World War. His compositions from this period document an ongoing argument with the Nazi-dominated homeland he had left behind. Brecht and Eisler’s 1930 Lehrstück or teaching-piece *Die Maßnahme* [*The Measures Taken*] had aroused heated controversy for its valorization

²⁵⁷ See Georg Lukács, “Hölderlins *Hyperion*,” in *Internationale Literatur* 5, 1935, 96-107.

of Socialist sacrifice; the National Socialists had banned their 1929/30 film *Kuhle Wampe* for its call to workers' solidarity and its honest treatment of abortion. During their peripatetic 1930s exile, Eisler and Brecht met frequently in Denmark to collaborate on song settings, the three-part elegy "An die Nachgeborenen" ["To Those Who Come After"] notably among them. Eisler also dedicated time to his anti-fascist *Deutsche Sinfonie*, which he described as "Avantgarde-Kunst und Volksfront"²⁵⁸ ["avant-garde art and Popular Front"]. Eisler had begun the symphony under a certain "Laune" or mood, in a Chicago hotel room;²⁵⁹ the project accompanied him from 1935 to 1940, as he passed through the U.S., England, France, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Scandinavia. Originally titled the "Konzentrationslagersymphonie"²⁶⁰ or "Concentration Camp Symphony," this complex work begins with the opening of Brecht's poem "O Deutschland, bleiche Mutter" ["O Germany, pale mother"] and works in a dialectic of percussive, syncopated Kampfmusik tropes and traditional markers of lament, from a "step of sorrow" passacaglia following an "Internationale" citation to muted horns playing a funerary motif. Here Eisler faced a challenge that would follow him throughout his career: "ich wollte Trauer ohne Sentimentalität und Kampf ohne Militärmusik darstellen"²⁶¹ ["I wanted to depict sorrow without sentimentality and struggle without military music"]. The composer's resistance to musical narcosis appears in his Hölderlin songs as well, but in more agonistic form.

²⁵⁸ Bunge, Hans. *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1976), 226. The term "Volksfront" refers to the 1935 Soviet Popular Front organized among various left-wing groups against fascism, not to be confused with the American neo-Nazi co-opting of the word in the mid-1990s.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Wißmann, 109.

²⁶¹ Dieter D. Herrmann, "Ich bin mit jedem Lob einverstanden": *Hanns Eisler im Gespräch 1960-1962* (Leipzig: Salier Verlag, 2009), 12.

Hollywood, hotbed of the very culture industry Eisler, Adorno, and other Marxist artists and thinkers decried for decades, became surprisingly fertile ground for the composer's treatment of canonical literary material. Eisler arrived in California after having taught at the New School in New York City, where he had won a reputation as the "Karl Marx of Communism in the realm of music."²⁶² Even several years before his HUAC hearing and deportation after the war, the U.S. government did not make his immigration easy. His 1935 American lecture circuit had been supported by Communist cultural activist Willi Münzenberg's trans-national Committee for the Relief of the Victims of German Fascism;²⁶³ Eisler's talks often included Kampflieder performances; and his articles from that period unabashedly critique the capitalist manipulations of Hollywood film music. Funding for his own Film Music Project, which laid the groundwork for his later collaboration with Theodor Adorno on the 1947 book *Composing for the Films*, was partly supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. Eisler's proposal brought his Communist leanings under scrutiny and required the diplomatic finesse of the New School's director, Alvin Johnson, to ease the immigration process.²⁶⁴ Still, Eisler and his wife Lou spent two years wrestling American bureaucracy to obtain visas, which they eventually did after a frustrating stay in Mexico and sweltering delays at the Mexicali/Calexico border control station in September 1940. Lou returned to New York for a time while Eisler settled in Malibu, where he reconnected with Schoenberg, Adorno, and Brecht, and met regularly with Thomas Mann and other members of the German exile community. He worked on film scores to make a living (Fritz Lang's *Hangmen Also Die* and Jean Renoir's *Woman on the Beach* among them),

²⁶² Wißmann, 108.

²⁶³ Sally Bick, "Eisler's Notes on Hollywood and the Film Music Project, 1935-42," in *Current Musicology* 86, 8-10.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 11-12.

attempting a critical approach to music for the movies, and undertook settings of poetry for voice and piano in the *Hollywooder Liederbuch*. This project included texts by Brecht, aphorisms by Pascal, a poem by Rimbaud, Eduard Mörike's "Anakreontische Fragmente," an Old Testament passage, Goethe's "Der Schatzgräber" ["The Treasure-seeker"], and the six Hölderlin fragments.

This chapter takes its title from Eisler's third Hölderlin song, "Elegie 1943," set to lines from "Der Frieden" ["Peace"]: "wer brachte den Fluch? von heut/ Ists nicht und nicht von gestern"²⁶⁵ ["Who brought the curse? not from today/ And not from yesterday"]. Writing in Nazi-era exile in his Pacific Palisades house, Eisler turned to Hölderlin at a time when the poet was glorified under Nazism; the question these text-settings raise is not who brought *this* curse to Germany but how to break it. That Hölderlin's most potentially nationalist-sounding poems attracted the composer may appear surprising at first. Eisler's settings work homeopathically, using the very materials co-opted by Hellingrath, Heidegger, and eventually Goebbels, to protest this "Blut und Boden" – or "Fluss und Boden," taking into account the poet's iconic German rivers – version of Hölderlin. Eisler's interventionist adaptation breaks down "An die Hoffnung" (1801), "Andenken" (1807), "Der Frieden" (1800), "Die Heimat" (1800), "Heidelberg" (1800), and "Gesang des Deutschen" (1799), cutting mythic links between earth and gods, self and nature, and leaving more Hölderlinian caesura than text. The poem-fragments are then set in a formal (and in this case not satirical) parody of the Schubertian and Schumannian song cycle. This ghostly re-functioning of the Lieder tradition also draws on Eisler's signature "step of sorrow" pattern to mourn the poisoning of inherited cultural material under Hitler. Most scholarship on this cycle since Claudia Albert's 1991 study *Das schwierige Handwerk des Hoffens* has emphasized its dialectic of sorrow and hope, taking a positivist view of the cycle's

²⁶⁵ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, ed. Jochen Schmidt (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005), 229. See also Hanns Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, corrected reprint of the First Edition, ed. Oliver Dahin and Peter Deeg (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 2007), 65.

conclusion. This chapter argues, rather, for a dialectic of beauty and resistance, as the cycle reflects Eisler's own uncomfortable position as a politically committed *and* formally driven composer, and as it treats his source poems in a critically elegiac mode. Overall, the cycle refutes from afar any attempt to fetishize canonical "Kulturgut" in Germany. Eisler's music both absorbs and disturbs the charisma of German "songfulness," destabilizes the poetic "I," and reveals the fragility of Hölderlin's poetic reach toward wholeness and home.

Estranging beauty

As Horst Weber points out, Eisler composed his Hölderlin songs for an audience of fellow exiles, since he was not fully integrated into southern California society, a double estrangement from a sense of home.²⁶⁶ Reasons for this included his German language, "die Sprache des Feindes" ["the language of the enemy"]; the German Lieder genre, with only a "Schattendasein" ["shadow existence"] in the U.S.; and the content of texts, "die von merkwürdigen Schicksalen handelten und als fremd beschworen, was den Einheimischen vertraut war"²⁶⁷ ["that took on unusual destinies and burdened with foreignness what locals found familiar"]. Unlike Kurt Weill, who adapted so easily to American culture that he spelled his name with a "C" for a time and criticized his fellow exiles for failing to enjoy California to the fullest,²⁶⁸ Eisler, Brecht, and Adorno in particular found the glitz and ease of Hollywood quite trying, as becomes very clear in Brecht's exile poem comparing Los Angeles to Hell.²⁶⁹ In his

²⁶⁶ Wißmann, 144.

²⁶⁷ Horst Weber, *"I am not a hero, I am a composer": Hanns Eisler in Hollywood* (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2012), 254.

²⁶⁸ Thanks to Byran Gilliam for this reminder, Duke University, 5 April 2016. See also Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff, eds., *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

²⁶⁹ Brinkmann and Wolff, 6.

own exile songs, Eisler was addressing the “enemy” his own homeland had become, with as much jilted-lover persistence as Heinrich Heine had from Paris a century earlier. Alongside the 1943 Hölderlin songs, Eisler drafted four songs to be sent to Germany via short-wave radio, a way of using radio in Brecht’s sense of “talking back” rather than passively taking in bad news – a problem also voiced in “An den kleinen Radioapparat” [“To the Little Radio”] from the same period.²⁷⁰ In a later conversation with Hans Bunge, Eisler wondered if he had shown lack of taste in setting lines from Hölderlin’s “Gesang des Deutschen” but insisted that he had composed something for those “Scheißkerle” [“shitheads”] anyway – an example of the composer’s self-described dialectic of contrarian engagement.²⁷¹

The Hölderlin project addressed, by different means, the problem Thomas Mann approached in *Doktor Faustus* while in 1940s California exile: the potential adhesiveness of “high” culture and socio-political sickness. Composer Adrian Leverkühn pursues his Schoenbergian project of musical systematization with soul-selling obsession, echoing the National Socialist paradox of “scientific” progress and atavism²⁷² – a pathologized artistic stance with which the actual Schoenberg would not have identified. For Eisler, reclaiming poetry and music absorbed into fascist ideology did not involve plumbing the depths of a creative or collective psyche that had made this possible, but rather dismantling and reframing the art forms themselves. In this way Eisler’s approach more closely resembles Paul Celan’s poetic strategy of fragmenting a language that could no longer be heard whole after the Shoah. At the same time, Eisler claimed to be following his own compositional instincts without a systematic approach:

²⁷⁰ Hanns Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, corrected reprint of the First Edition, ed. Oliver Dahin and Peter Deeg (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 2007), commentary, 93.

²⁷¹ Ibid. 95. See also Bunge, 194-197.

²⁷² Thomas Pfau, seminar in music and philosophy, Duke University, April 2012.

“Das heißt, man liest ein Gedicht und versucht – ohne Barbar zu sein – das zusammenzufassen, was einem heute wichtig erscheint”²⁷³ [“This means, one reads a poem and tries – without being a barbarian – to arrange what seems to him most important today”]. In fact his cuts to Hölderlin are quite radical, often leaving only a few lines or one stanza of the source poem. These cuts can in fact be seen as both political and aesthetic decisions: first to break down texts that had been appropriated for heavy-handed nationalism, and at the same time to respond to musical demands. By working in both modes with equal intensity, these text-settings touch the core of the Expressionism debates of the 1930s.

In 1938, Eisler and Ernst Bloch had co-written an essay addressing concerns about bourgeois art and ideological appropriation, “Die Kunst zu erben” [“To Inherit Art”]. Eisler’s portion of the essay warns against three forms of past artworks’ misuse: the “vulgär-soziologischen Kunstbetrachtung” [“vulgarily sociological view of art”] plaguing the Soviet Union; the “unkritische Wahllosigkeit” [“uncritical indiscriminateness”] taken up against socialist art and seeing classics everywhere; and the fascist “Kunstbürokratie” [“arts bureaucracy”] taking over past art forms in the name of “Tradition” – a word Eisler contrasts with “Erbe” or “inheritance.”²⁷⁴ The way forward, the composer argues, is “die zugelassene Klassik in einem revolutionären Sinn zu interpretieren”²⁷⁵ [“to interpret the authorized classics in a revolutionary way”]. Eisler takes up legal-ethical language (on the possibility, “*legal* gegen die

²⁷³ Bunge, 219.

²⁷⁴ See Ernst Bloch and Hanns Eisler, “Die Kunst zu Erben,” in Hans-Jürgen Schmitt, ed., *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 258-259.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 259.

Unterdrückung der Gedankfreiheit zu demonstrieren”²⁷⁶ [“to demonstrate *legally* against the oppression of freedom of thought”]), in order to show the *il*-legal appropriation of older art forms under fascism, or the failure to appreciate “authorized” canonical works in favor of valorizing anything that echoes the “schöne Klang” [“beautiful sound”] associated with nineteenth-century harmony.²⁷⁷ He recognizes the difficulty of walking the fine line between productively responding to older art forms and merely reproducing schoolroom tedium. The key for him lies in the poetic and musical materials themselves, which are not static but part of the historical process, in the Hegelian sense – a process his own text-settings embody, even as they disenchant (“entzaubern,” a word Eisler uses with reference to Marx and Engels) their sources.²⁷⁸ Unlike Georg Lukács, who saw traditional and contemporary aesthetic materials in opposition, Eisler worked in a dialectic of “Fortschritt und Zurücknahme”²⁷⁹ [“progress and taking back”], viewing his own work as part of art’s own development in social and technological context. And unlike the composer Adrian Leverkühn in Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*, Eisler did not set out to “take back” compromised aesthetic material (Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, in Leverkühn’s agonistic wish²⁸⁰) only in terms of revocation, but rather to reclaim, disturb, and transform it. At the same time, in his use of twelve-tone technique, he was protesting fascist claims of “degeneracy” in modern art forms.²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. 260.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. 260-261.

²⁷⁹ See Günter Mayer, *Weltbild—Notenbild. Zur Dialektik des musikalischen Materials* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1978), 251-252.

²⁸⁰ Thomas Mann, *Doktor Faustus* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 2007), 692-693.

²⁸¹ Mayer, *Weltbild—Notenbild*, 271.

Brecht's influence cannot be underestimated in Eisler's estrangement of older art forms' charisma. Though his well-known "Kleines Organon" essay on epic theater dates from 1949, after Eisler's work on the Hölderlin songs, Brecht's ideas of dramatic distancing had long played a large role in the two men's ballads, plays, and Lehrstücke. Sharing Eisler's suspicion of trance states in performers and/or audience members, he often worked to induce *and* estrange such states. A playfully dialectical passage in the "Kleines Organon" illustrates the tension between charisma and its critique: "Selbst Besessene darstellend, darf [der Schauspieler] selber nicht besessen wirken; wie sonst könnten die Zuschauer ausfinden, was die Besessenen besitzt?"²⁸² ["Even demonstrating possession, [the actor] may not be possessed himself; how else could the audience find out what the possessed possess?"]. Like Brecht's plays that expose what the audience likely assumes are natural social conditions as not necessarily so, Eisler's music shows the contingency of cultural material often taken for granted. In an essay on Schoenberg, Eisler points out that even major-minor tonality is a construct of the social-historical process; he cites medieval church modes as an example of what sounds "natural" in a certain time period and may not to later listeners.²⁸³ In his *Composing for the Films* project with Adorno, Eisler defends modernist music for its capacity to interrupt the socially conditioned process of musical association, so that certain musical shapes become – or appear to be – automatically "expressive."²⁸⁴ Adapting Hölderlin's texts, Eisler uses modernist fragmentation to estrange

²⁸² Bertolt Brecht, "Kleines Organon für das Theater," in Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei, and Klaus-Detlef Müller, eds., *Bertolt Brecht, Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, Vol. 23, Schriften 3, 83.

²⁸³ Hanns Eisler, "Arnold Schönberg," in *Materialien zu einer Dialektik von Musik*, ed. Manfred Grabs (Leipzig: Reclam, 1976), 238.

²⁸⁴ See Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno, *Composing for the Films* (London and New York, Continuum, 2007), 22.

poems that already take fragmentation and estrangement as their subject. Hölderlin voices dissonances in character and country through the “violence internal to his poetry, in which form is meant to heal and wound.”²⁸⁵ Eisler’s text-broken settings illuminate the fragility inherent in Hölderlin’s project, finding the brittle nodes between gods and humans, utopia and exile. His music further complicates the poetry by invoking and resisting lyric beauty.

The contested poet

Hölderlin’s biography (1770-1843) usually traces his upbringing in the southern German Württemberg region to his intellectual formation in the Hegel-Schelling circle in Tübingen, where his interest in the Greek poetic tradition, in Enlightenment progressivism, and in dialectical thinking found ample support. In Jena he formed connections with Schiller, Goethe, and Fichte, whose isolationist take on Kantian subjectivity he rejected. Hölderlin’s story is also marked by a doomed romantic relationship with Susette Gontard, mother of his private pupil, whom he addressed and fictionalized in his writings as Diotima. The poet’s mental collapse, institutionalization in Tübingen, increasingly fragmentary writings, and final decades in a solitary tower are well known. Despite his later appropriation under National Socialism, Hölderlin’s political leanings did not focus on German identity so much as they applied outside models – the French Revolution, an idealized pantheistic Greece – toward a cosmopolitan vision of what his homeland could become. Some of his odes from the pre-1800 period, including the “Gesang des Deutschen” do show a privileging of German cultural sensibility, common in the writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Schiller as well. Praise of “Tiefe” and “Ernst” [“depth” and “seriousness”] quietly at work in German artistic and scholarly achievement was perhaps a

²⁸⁵ Thanks to Gabriel Trop for this expression, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 9 April 2013.

way of compensating for the lack of a geographically united homeland.²⁸⁶ Especially after Hölderlin's personal and academic disappointments in 1800, the broader failure of hope for wholeness in human life, both inwardly and in a broader political sense, enacts a stronger pull on his work than celebration of any "essential" cultural qualities. The poet also realized that even one's own place and language contain a potential for estrangement, valorized in his dialectic of "das Eigene und das Fremde":

Aber das eigene muß so gut gelernt sein, wie das Fremde. Deswegen sind uns die Griechen unentbehrlich. Nur werden wir ihnen gerade in unserem Eigenen, Nationellen nicht nachkommen, weil, wie gesagt, der *freie* Gebrauch des Eigenen das schwerste ist.²⁸⁷

[But what is one's own must be learned as well as what is foreign. Therefore the Greeks are indispensable to us. We will not take after them exactly in our nation-centered separateness, because, as has been said, the *free* use of what is one's own is the most difficult.]

Hölderlin's nuanced sense of political responsibility found voice in his 1790s epistolary novel *Hyperion*, in which the protagonist faces the costs of fighting for Greek freedom from Turkish rule and eventually transcends human disappointments in communion with nature. Hyperion's oscillations between resisting and answering the call to war, more than his Hegelian subsuming of one life-focus (the teacher-pupil relationship, friendship, love) into the next, reflects Hölderlin's idea of the "exzentrische Bahn"²⁸⁸ ["excentric/eccentric path"] of human life,

²⁸⁶ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 637-639.

²⁸⁷ See Friedrich Hölderlin, letter to Casmir von Böhlendorff, 4. December 1801, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Frankfurter Ausgabe, ed. D. E. Sattler (Frankfurt and Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 2007), 492-93.

²⁸⁸ "Die exzentrische Bahn, die der Mensch, im Allgemeinen und Einzelnen, von einem Punkte (der mehr oder weniger reinen Einfalt) zum andern (der mehr oder weniger vollendeten Bildung) durchläuft, scheint sich, *nach ihren wesentlichen Richtungen*, immer gleich zu sein" ["The excentric/eccentric path that the human being, generally and individually, traverses from one point (more or less pure simplicity) to another (more or less complete education) appears, *according to its essential directions*, always to be the same"]. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*. Kleine Stuttgarter Ausgabe, Volume 3, ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1958), 169.

as well as his own eccentric take on dialectical thinking itself. His reworking of the novel into verse form in its second edition is another sign of this back-and-forth dynamic. Progress is never a given in his work; rather, his poetry works in tension between the longing for unity with humankind or with nature and a sense of individual marginalization, and between cosmopolitan optimism and an undercurrent of despair, at the unmasking of what one once imagined as utopia.²⁸⁹ In addition, like his contemporary Beethoven, Hölderlin was working in the midst of post-Kantian, post-French Revolution questioning of the world's order;²⁹⁰ a searching quality in his work often sounds like thought speaking itself between a sense of freedom and despair at this very freedom. On the formal level, this oscillatory dynamic manifests between Greek syllabic meters and stress-accentual German into which they are adapted; between familiar tropes and images and their estrangement; and between lyric and gnomic or aphoristic expression.

Hölderlin's poetic world isolates antique forms and moods "no longer ... capable articulating a totality," thus exposing the way in which "all art encrypt[s] such loss in forms whose peculiar fate it is to become calcified over time."²⁹¹ That Hanns Eisler's textual cuts occur at easily broken formal or thematic points attests to this frangible aspect of Hölderlin's verse. The poet approached "calcified" Greek forms with his own system of alternating "tones," or "Wechsel der Töne," in which affective material grounds and animates the naive, energetic, or

²⁸⁹ Thomas Pfau, seminar lecture, Duke University, 3 February 2014.

²⁹⁰ Composer Alain Franco has explored this shifting political-cultural ground in his talk "Auswanderung und Übertreibung. Büchner, Lenz und Rihm," Volksbühne am Rosa- Luxembourg-Platz, Berlin, 18 November 2014.

²⁹¹ Thomas Pfau, "Mourning Modernity," in Weisman, Karen Weisman, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 560.

idealistic poem according to a dynamic of “Phantasie,” “Empfindung,” and “Leidenschaft”²⁹² [“fantasy,” “sentiment,” and “passion”]. Following an already long-established German tradition of borrowing from Greek models, systematized in Martin Optitz’ 1624 *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey* and later enacted in Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock’s eighteenth-century idylls and odes, Hölderlin took on a far more ambitious project than most of Klopstock’s imitators: to translate the sound of Greek into German, to realize his sense of foreignness in the familiar, though he realized that his native stress-accentual language would never reach the “clicking” quality of Greek. This sense of working out impossibility on the page mirrors Hölderlin’s larger effort to test the ways in which the world holds together – and finding that it does not; “the mind breaks on its own poetic experiment.”²⁹³ Hölderlin’s famous caesura embodies this break, which is also an opening, an idea Heidegger would later exploit. For this poet, the aesthetic experience cannot be systematically planned but only glimpsed; “only through a transgression, through the disjunction of its unity does Being veritably disclose itself.”²⁹⁴

Hölderlin’s caesura, or “catastrophe” of the poem, occurs with a strange belatedness, when language-momentum builds in the more rapid second half of the line, yielding a “tragische Transport” [“tragic transport”] in the “empty” caesura that has already broken it:

Der tragische *Transport* ist nemlich eigentlich leer, und der ungebundenste.

Dadurch wird in der rhythmischen Aufeinanderfolge der Vorstellungen, worinn der *Transport* sich darstellt, das, was man im *Sylbenmaaße Cäsar* heißt, das reine Wort, die gegenrhythmische Unterbrechung notwendig, um nemlich dem reißenden Wechsel der

²⁹² See Friedrich Hölderlin, “Über der Unterschied der Dichtarten,” in *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 4.1, ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1961), 266-272.

²⁹³ Thanks to Gabriel Trop for helping to articulate this aspect of Hölderlin, UNC Chapel Hill, 9 April 2013.

²⁹⁴ Thomas Pfau, ed. and trans., *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 26.

Vorstellungen, auf seinem Summum, so zu begegnen, daß alsdann nicht mehr der Wechsel der Vorstellung, sondern die Vorstellung selber erscheint.

... Ist nun der Rhythmus der Vortstellungen so beschaffen, daß, in exzentrischer Rapidität, die *ersten* mehr durch die *folgenden* hingerissen sind, so muß die Cäsur oder die gegenrhythmische Unterbrechung *von vorne* liegen, so daß die erste Hälfte gleichsam gegen die zweite geschützt ist, und das Gleichgewicht wird, eben weil die zweite Hälfte ursprünglich rapider ist, und schwerer zu wiegen scheint, der entgegenwirkenden Cäsur wegen, mehr sich von hinten her gegen den Anfang neigen.²⁹⁵

[That is to say, the tragic *transport* is actually empty, and the most unbound.

Through this, what one calls *caesura* according to *syllabic meter* becomes the pure word, the necessary counter-rhythmic interruption, in the rhythmic sequence of representations, wherein the *transport* shows itself, in order to encounter the wrenching shift of representations, in its totality, so that, then, it is no longer the shift of representation but the representation itself that appears.

... The rhythm of representations is so created that, in eccentric rapidity, the *first* are more carried away through the *following*, and so the *caesura* or the counter-rhythmic interruption must lie *before*, so that the first half is guarded from the second, and becomes balanced, precisely because the second half is originally faster, and appears more weighted due to the counter-working caesura, leaning more from behind toward the beginning.]

The time-lapse aspect of the caesura reflects the temporal displacement typical of many Hölderlin poems, in their “lyric aesthetic that performs the no-longer-coherent state of modernity.”²⁹⁶ The poet relates this rhythmic break not only to the rupture of “carrying away” or “entrancement” (another meaning of “hingerissen”), an idea important to Eisler as well, but also to a tragic but necessary inner disruption. In his essay on Sophocles’ *Oedipus*, he sees this break in the moment in which Oedipus realizes that he is in fact the person who has committed the crimes the person he imagined himself to be could not. At this mid-point in human life, one is

²⁹⁵ Friedrich Hölderlin, “Anmerkungen zum Ödipus,” in *Sämtliche Werke*, Frankfurter Ausgabe, Vol. 16, ed. Michael Franz, Michael Knaupp, and D.E. Sattler (Frankfurt and Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1988), 250-251. Spellings and italicizations Hölderlin’s.

²⁹⁶ Pfau, “Mourning Modernity,” 560.

“transported” to the “excentric sphere of the dead.”²⁹⁷ Here is Hölderlin’s view of the caesura as manifest in human narrative:

[Teresias] tritt ein in den Gang des Schicksals, als Aufseher über die Naturmacht, die tragisch den Menschen seiner Lebenssphäre, dem Mittelpuncte seines innern Lebens in eine andere Welt entrückt und in die exzentrische Sphäre der Todten reißt.²⁹⁸

[(Teresias)] enters into the course of destiny, as a steward of natural force that, tragically for humans, carries them off into another world and tears them away into the excentric sphere of the dead.]²⁹⁹

This rhythmic/existential buildup and break are enacted in Hölderlin’s odes; the Greek Alcaic and Asclepiadean strophes break at either asymmetrical or symmetrical points in the line. Five of the six odes Hanns Eisler set are in Alcaic meter, with its forward-swelling drive and unstressed-stressed (in its German incarnation) point at the caesura, less disruptive than the Asclepiadean break, which occurs between two stressed syllables. Eisler’s fragmenting of the texts creates a more radical break than either of these metrical forms does. The ease with which he excerpts lines and stanzas indicates a brittleness in Hölderlin’s poetic balancing act, perhaps also due to the poet’s own unease in the ode form as he searched for a less constrained poetic space,³⁰⁰ and perhaps part of the reason his work has frequently been appropriated piecemeal for political use, despite its ambivalence and complexity.

²⁹⁷ Here Hölderlin uses a phrase, “in eine andere Welt entrückt“ [“carried away into another world”], later taken up by Franz von Schober and set by Schubert as “in eine bess’re Welt entrückt” [“carried away into a better world”] in his well-known song “An die Musik.” Franz Schubert and Franz von Schober, “An die Musik” (Leipzig: Edition Peters 20a), 236.

²⁹⁸ Hölderlin, “Anmerkungen zum Ödipus,” 251.

²⁹⁹ My translation draws on Thomas Pfau’s, which renders Hölderlin’s “exzentrische” as “excentric,” giving the word more off-from-center connotation than “eccentric.” See Pfau, trans., *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*, 101-102.

³⁰⁰ Thanks to Thomas Pfau for this insight.

Viewed most widely in the nineteenth century either as the writer of *Hyperion*³⁰¹ or as an “incurable dreamer and romantic whose utter inability to cope with life’s demands might serve as a warning to impressionable young minds,”³⁰² Friedrich Hölderlin became a very different kind of cultural figure in the first half of the twentieth. The poet who had taken German adaptations of Greek poetic forms to their breaking point, who had supported the French revolution, and who had envisaged a cosmopolitan form of homeland, became a German nationalist fetish-object. The process began with Norbert von Hellingrath’s publication of a Hölderlin edition in 1916. Hellingrath’s efforts to de-pathologize the poet, to examine his stagings of Pindaric verse, and to salvage his lesser-known works in the midst of the First World War – to which Hellingrath himself fell victim at Verdun, the same year as the book’s publication – led not only to a reappraisal of the “mad” nineteenth-century poet but also to German soldiers’ carrying the volume into the trenches, where they read his “Abendphantasie” along with the (ostensibly) comfortable miniatures of Eichendorff.³⁰³ Over the next two decades, Hölderlin was taken up by Stefan George and the Expressionist poetry movement, by Martin Heidegger’s philosophy of German rootedness,³⁰⁴ and by the Nazi propaganda machine, in its aestheticization of “Leid, Kampf, und Tod”³⁰⁵ [“sorrow, struggle, and death”]. A Goebbels-sanctioned 1943 edition of

³⁰¹ Hölderlin *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 485.

³⁰² Robert Savage, *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe: Heidegger – Adorno – Brecht* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 10. Hölderlin’s friend Schelling was in part responsible for this pathologizing turn in his reception, following his response to the poet’s *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex* translations. See *Ibid.* 6.

³⁰³ Thomas Pfau, seminar lecture, Duke University, 8 February 2014.

³⁰⁴ See Charles Bambach, *Heidegger’s Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism, and the Greeks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

³⁰⁵ Johann Kreuzer, ed., *Hölderlin-Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2002), 444.

Hölderlin, published in Stuttgart, accompanied German soldiers, this time to the Eastern Front, where SS officers and enlisted men alike wrote letters expressing gratitude for the poet's capacity to rekindle their military enthusiasm.³⁰⁶ At a time when very few works of belles lettres were published in Germany,³⁰⁷ and amid a severe paper shortage, the ordering of 194,000 copies and printing of 100,000 attests to the heavy influence of the Third Reich's Hölderlin Society, founded in 1943, the centenary of the poet's birth.³⁰⁸ By 1946, the poet Günter Eich (soon to be a founding member of the Gruppe 47) brought Hölderlin's wartime reception painfully to light in a poem that takes a cloud image from his 1807 "Andenken" and sends it swimming in a soldier's makeshift latrine:

Irr mir im Ohre schallen
Verse von Hölderlin.
In schneeiger Reinheit spiegeln
Wolken sich im Urin.³⁰⁹

[In my ears echo crazily
Lines by Hölderlin.
Clouds in snowy purity
Are mirrored in the urine.]

Robert Savage notes that Eich's poem links Hölderlin's "Andenken," a remembrance of time spent in Bordeaux, with his own 1940 military training in the south of France; "Hölderlin's vision is simply irreconcilable with what Eich sees around him."³¹⁰ How did the idiosyncratic

³⁰⁶ Savage, 6.

³⁰⁷ Pfau, seminar lecture.

³⁰⁸ Savage, 5.

³⁰⁹ Günter Eich, "Latrine," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1, ed. Axel Vieregge (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), 37.

³¹⁰ Savage, 2.

Grecophile poet become so lionized by the German cult of violence that he would threaten a new generation with poisoned images and sonorities?

Hölderlin's claiming by the Stefan George circle was one step, if not directly toward Nazi appropriation, at least toward an essentializing of "Germanness" that eclipsed the poet's historical context, not to mention his own aesthetic project, in favor of a sense of mystery and irrationality in poetry. George himself was a mentor to Hellingrath, who brought a marked Expressionist flavor to his Hölderlin edition.³¹¹ The poet's leaps and juxtapositions, in addition to the broken, floating lines of his late work, spoke to the poets who worked with associative image and split syntax. Hölderlin's own reasons for his poetry's paratactic movement, for the caesura as rupture, still point, and transport, receded into the background. He would hardly have recognized his own poetic project in its avant-garde-prophetic guise, his vanished Greek gods vaguely Nordified, his voice charged with nationalist religiosity. Expressionism itself became a fraught topic in the formalism debates before and after the war. Despite the movement's stigmatization as "degenerate" by the Nazi cultural elite, its leanings toward atavism and myth fed the fascist drive, as argued by George Lukács in a 1934 essay, a position countered by Ernst Bloch in the two thinkers' famous debate of 1938.³¹² For Hellingrath and George, Hölderlin reflected Expressionist tendencies, and in one somewhat controversial interpretation, his poetry represented a "secret Germany" in paradoxical relationship to the public rituals it both justified and resisted, in its need to remain hidden at the archetypal level.³¹³

³¹¹ Ibid. 8-10.

³¹² See Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno. *Aesthetics and Politics*. Translated and edited by Ronald Taylor. London: NLB, 1977.

³¹³ Savage, 10. See also Robert E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and His Circle* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

Heidegger's Hölderlin took a more subtle but no less essentializing form. He gave a series of lectures on the poet in 1934 and again during the Third Reich era, material collected into the 1944 volume *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* and revisited in his famous 1966 *Spiegel* interview. The 1934 lectures show Heidegger's faith in a "quasi-artistic act of state-creation"³¹⁴ in which the poet speaks with and for the "secret Germany" Hellingrath had invoked in his 1916 edition. Robert Savage argues that Heidegger's eventual loss of faith in Hitler's political capacity to raise up a nation from these roots led him to valorize Hölderlin, in his 1940s lectures, as a more suitable power of state-formation.³¹⁵ The philosopher also drew on Hölderlin to underpin his own "Heimat"-mysticism, a move based on profound misreading of the poet. As Charles Bambach has noted,

For Heidegger, the foreigner, the stranger, the Jew, the Asiatic will all come to represent a threat to the homeland, constituting an "uncanny" (*unheimlich*) other who undermines the rooted dwelling of the homeland (*Heimat*). ... In Hölderlin's work ... we can find traces of a nonmetaphysical, poetic *ethos* that strives to bring the native and the foreign into relation without subsuming them into a higher third term that "reconciles" them.³¹⁶

That the poet was long dead allowed Heidegger the freedom to assign him a prophetic role and to distance himself from the Nazi horrors whose beginnings he had celebrated, most notably in his 1933 Rektoratsrede [Rectoral Address] in Freiburg. In his 1943 essay "Der Ister," referring to one of Hölderlin's well-known river poems, he uses the image of a German river to engage a problem never quite resolved in *Sein und Zeit* – namely, what is the possibility for authentic being when Dasein cannot escape its thrownness ("Geworfenheit") into historical and everyday reality? Heidegger frames his answer in terms of a "call" or summons, meditating on the poem's

³¹⁴ Savage, 44.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.* 15.

³¹⁶ Charles Bambach, *Thinking the poetic measure of justice: Hölderlin, Heidegger, Celan* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 24.

first line: “Jetzt [sic] komme, Feuer!”³¹⁷ [“Now come, fire!”]. Heidegger also valorizes the idea of “clearing” or the call into “das Offene” [“the open”] in Hölderlin, not as an irruptive caesura but as a liminal space between mortal and divine,³¹⁸ or in his existentialist view, between the ontic and the ontological. His explications, in spiraling, hypotactic sentences or in short reflexive utterances, focus on Hölderlin’s vowel-echoing sonorities rather than on the fragile paratactic links in his lines. For example, Heidegger responds to a recollection of Bordeaux gardens in Heidegger’s “Andenken,” one of the poems Eisler set, with an extended improvisation on the word “Gruß” [“Greeting”] that ends with this line:

Sofern der Grüßende überhaupt und in einer Hinsicht notwendig von sich sagt, sagt er gerade, daß er für sich nichts will, sondern alles dem Gegrüßten zuwendet, alles das nämlich, was im Grüßen dem Gegrüßten zugesagt wird. Das ist all jenes, was dem Gegrüßten gebührt, als dem, das es ist.³¹⁹

[Inasfar as the greeted one generally and in this regard necessarily speaks of himself, he says exactly, that he wants nothing for himself, except all that is afforded the greeted, all that, namely, is said in the greeting to the greeted. This is all that is due the greeted, as that, which it is.]

Rather than speaking to the distance between the speaker and his lost, remembered landscape, Heidegger attempts a poetic response to the poet, circling ontological depth in words’ roots and resonances. Recordings of Heidegger’s Hölderlin readings are notable for the singsong, hypnotic quality of his voice, which does reflect sensitivity to adapted Greek meter but downplays the halting, paratactic aspect of the poet’s language Eisler and later Adorno emphasized.³²⁰

³¹⁷ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 362.

³¹⁸ Kreuzer, 433.

³¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, “Hölderlins Hymne ‘Andenken,’” in Curd Ochwad, ed., *Gesamtausgabe*, Series II, Vol. 52 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982), 50.

³²⁰ For a recording of Heidegger reading Hölderlin’s poem “Heimkehr,” see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zRTV6gDh3k>. Web, accessed 2 March 2014.

Thematically, Heidegger focuses on Hölderlin's poems that can yield a quasi-mystical interpretation, in their movement toward the sea, toward home, or toward fiery illumination,³²¹ an emphasis that strongly influenced the poet's National Socialist reception. Heidegger retained his faith in an "original and uncontaminated"³²² Germanness that Hitler's Germany had failed, by not taking it seriously *enough*, a Germanness still waiting under what he felt was just temporarily bloodied soil. In 1943, when the Hölderlin Society was founded to celebrate the poet's centenary, Joseph Goebbels took on the title of honorary patron. Several months before the Stuttgart edition's first volume was released, a commemorative book went to press in Tübingen, containing words on Hölderlin by Heidegger as well as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Walter Rehm.³²³ During this period the poet became particularly important for Eastern Front propaganda, as an encouragement when soldiers' morale was flagging, an echo of his poems' presence in the trenches of World War I.

Despite his seemingly easy appropriation under fascism, Hölderlin had long been claimed by the left-socialist movement in and outside Germany as well, if more quietly. His "Gesang des Deutschen," taken up on the Eastern Front as an "Aufruf zu praktischer Bewährung," ["call to practical testing"] was treated among exiles "als Appell an das 'andere' oder 'bessere' Deutschland"³²⁴ ["as an appeal to the 'other' or 'better' Germany"], more in line with Hölderlin's own post-French Revolution hopes and disappointments. As early as 1914/15, Walter Benjamin had responded to Hellingrath's Hölderlin project with two studies not

³²¹ See Martin Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981).

³²² Savage, 72-73.

³²³ *Ibid.* 5.

³²⁴ Kreuzer, 444.

published until 1955. While distancing himself from the Stefan George circle, Benjamin focused on the particular language-movement in Hölderlin, anticipating Adorno's later essay "Parataxis."³²⁵ In 1928 Thomas Mann invoked the poet and Marx in the same breath: "Ich sagte, gut werde es erst stehen um Deutschland ... wenn Karl Marx den Friedrich Hölderlin gelesen haben werde."³²⁶ ["I said, it will be good for Germany ... if Karl Marx will have read Friedrich Hölderlin"]. The People's Front, which brought bourgeois and Communist anti-fascists together under one banner, found inspiration in Hölderlin's cosmopolitanism. In 1943, leftist poet Johannes Becher contributed a piece to the *Internationale Literatur* journal, claiming Hölderlin for the anti-fascist cause while holding to nationalistic language (and sounding remarkably similar to Heidegger in his foreclosure of the poet's politically ambivalent poetics³²⁷):

Wir stehen im Lichtkreis dieses großes Genius, wenn wir zum heiligen Kampf aufrufen gegen die deutschen Tyrannen des deutschen Vaterlands, und da es das freiheitlich Heldenhafte vor allem ist, das der Dichter gefeiert hat, so tragen die Helden dieses Kampfes auch Hölderlins Namen auf ihrer Fahne.³²⁸

[We stand in the light of this great genius, when we call for a sacred struggle against the German tyrants of the German fatherland, and as it is above all freedom-loving heroism that the poet celebrated, so this struggle's heroes bear Hölderlin's name on their banner.]

The poet's actual unease with fixed ideas of homeland, as noted by Georg Lukács in "Hölderlins *Hyperion*,"³²⁹ led to his being set by composer Paul Hindemith "in an attitude of 'inner

³²⁵ Ibid. 439-440.

³²⁶ Thomas Mann, "Kultur und Sozialismus," in *Essays*, Vol. 3, ed. Hermann Kurzke and Stephan Stachorski (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994), 63.

³²⁷ Thanks to Thomas Pfau for this observation.

³²⁸ Johannes Becher, *Schriften zur Literatur*, Berlin and Weimar, 1964, 347, quoted in Albrecht Betz, "Eisler und Hölderlin in Hollywood," in *Hanns Eisler der Zeitgenosse: Positionen – Perspektiven*. Materialien zu den Eisler-Festen 1994/95, ed. Günter Mayer (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1997), 81.

³²⁹ See Georg Lukács, "Hölderlins *Hyperion*," in *Internationale Literatur* 5, 1935, 96-107.

emigration” in the 1930s,³³⁰ but without the interventionist approach Hanns Eisler took in the next decade. In the 1940s, writers including Anna Seghers, Hermann Hesse, and Stefan Zweig attempted to write “their” Hölderlin-poem, reclaiming his legacy in personal poetic terms.³³¹ It is also telling that in 1943 composer and pianist Gideon Klein set a madrigal to a Czech translation of Hölderlin, as an act of resistance in Theresienstadt.³³²

After a period of postwar whitewashing, in which the Hitler-sanctioned Hölderlin Society disbanded under pressure from French authorities,³³³ enough echoes remained of the nationalist Hölderlin to require the rescue efforts of Brecht, Adorno, Celan, and Peter Weiss. In its historical re-contextualizing of Hölderlin, emphasizing the poet’s idiosyncratic sense of local and global homeland, Adorno’s 1963 speech “Parataxis” acted as a rebuttal of Heidegger and of the poet’s broader right-wing appropriation:

Das Wort Vaterland selbst jedoch hat in dem hundertfünfzig Jahren seit der Niederschrift jener Gedichte [“Die vaterländische Gesänge”] zum Schlimmen sich verändert, die Unschuld verloren ... Es durchtränkte sich mit einem Nationalismus, von dem bei Hölderlin jede Spur fehlt.³³⁴

[The word “Fatherland” itself has, however, in the hundred fifty years since the writing of those poems (“Songs of the Fatherland”) changed in a terrible way, lost its innocence ... It has been soaked through with a nationalism, every trace of which Hölderlin lacks.]

³³⁰ Hanns-Werner Heister, “Hollywood and Home: Hanns Eisler’s ‘Hölderlin-Fragmente’ for Voice and Piano,” in Blake, 207.

³³¹ Kreuzer, 447.

³³² Hans-Werner Heister, “Hanns Eisler’s ‘Hölderlin-Fragmente’ for Voice and Piano,” in Blake, 207.

³³³ Savage, 13.

³³⁴ Theodor Adorno, “Parataxis,” in *Noten zur Literatur* III (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 458.

Adorno's "Parataxis" rejects Heidegger's de-historicizing of Hölderlin, favors dialectical-material readings, and critiques the "Beliebigkeit des marktgängigen Tiefsinns"³³⁵ ["arbitrariness of marketable profundity"] as applied to the poet. In addition to introducing a Marxist-inflected approach, he reclaims for Hölderlin a poetic subjectivity that unfolds not through ontological abstraction but through language itself. Adorno describes the poet's syntax in concrete terms, as a "Konstellation der Worte," ["constellation of words"] that do not connect with hypotactic tissue but rather resonate in all their multivalence and strangeness.³³⁶ Framing Hölderlin's paratactic lines in musical terms, Adorno notes, in classic negative-dialectic form, the poet's ability to speak for subjectivity that *can* no longer speak.³³⁷ Brecht's adaptation of Hölderlin's *Antigone* translation, Celan's frequent citation of the poet in his post-Shoah poetry (most notably in "Tübingen, Jänner"), and Peter Weiss' biographical play also countered the remaining resonance of Hölderlin's Nazi-era reception in the years from 1947 to 1972. In the DDR, Hölderlin continued to be celebrated as a poet of the German people, thanks to his anti-fascist but equally nationalist reception in the Moscow exile community, a vision continued by poet-turned-Culture Minister Johannes Becher,³³⁸ whose text to the East German national hymn Hanns Eisler set in 1949.

Parataxis/Fragmentation

Looking at Hölderlin's poetry on the page, one can see that the earlier, longer odes tend to shift inward from the left margin, leaving significant white space behind. The poet's later

³³⁵ Ibid. 445.

³³⁶ Ibid. 473.

³³⁷ Ibid. 476-478.

³³⁸ Savage, 16.

work reflects his mental breakdown, as lines and single words separate and float until negative space dominates the page. Even at this visual level, it is not difficult to see how Eisler might see Hölderlin's language as easily broken into smaller pieces. As East German Eisler scholar Günter Mayer notes in his 1978 study of the composer's dialectics, Eisler creates a "prism" of new musical language, through which "wurden verschiedene musikalische Materialien und Verfahrensweisen 'gebrochen' und im Interesse der Vermittlung revolutionäre Haltungen zu einer neuen originellen Einheit verschmolzen"³³⁹ ["various musical materials and techniques are 'broken' and melded into a new, original unity, in the interest of conveying revolutionary attitudes"]. This breakage and coalescence does not only occur at the musical level, e.g. in Eisler's use of Baroque ground bass and major-minor tonality, but first, and just as importantly, in his textual adaptation. In order to illustrate his radically excisive approach to adapting Hölderlin, I will provide an overview of the six poems and their fragmented versions, with the first source text cited in full to show the scale of Eisler's alterations. Musical analysis follows in the next section.

The cycle opens with "An die Hoffnung," first drafted under the title "Bitte" ["Plea"] during Hölderlin's time in Homburg at the turn of the nineteenth century.³⁴⁰

O Hoffnung! holde! gütiggeschäftige!
 Die du das Haus der Trauernden nicht verschmähst,
 Und gerne dienend, Edle! zwischen
 Sterblichen waltest und Himmelsmächten,

Wo bist du? wenig lebt' ich; doch atmet kalt
 Mein Abend schon. Und stille, den Schatten gleich,
 Bin ich schon hier; und schon gesanglos
 Schlummert das schauernde Herz im Busen.

³³⁹ Mayer, *Weltbild—Notenbild*, 267.

³⁴⁰ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 822.

Im grünen Tale, dort, wo der frische Quell
Vom Berge täglich rauscht, und die liebliche
Zeitlose mir am Herbsttag aufblüht,
Dort, in der Stille, du Holde, will ich

Dich suchen, oder wenn in der Mitternacht
Das unsichtbare Leben im Haine wallt,
Und über mir die immerfrohen
Blumen, die blühenden Sterne glänzen,

O du des Äthers Tochter! erscheine dann
Aus deines Vaters Gärten, und darfst du nicht
Ein Geist der Erde, kommen, schreck, o
Schrecke mit anderem nur das Herz mir.³⁴¹

[O hope! gracious one busied for good!
You who do not scorn the house of the sorrowful
And gladly serving, noble one! between
Mortals and heavenly powers presiding,

Where are you? I have lived only a little; yet
My evening already breathes cold. And silent, like the shadows,
I am here already, too; and songless
Sleeps my shuddering heart in my breast.

In the green valley, there, where the fresh spring
Rushes daily from the mountains, timeless delights
Blooming up for me in the autumn day,
There, in the stillness, you gracious one, I want

To seek you, or if at midnight
Invisible life flutters in the groves,
And over me the ever-joyful
Flowers, the blooming stars are shining,

O Aether's daughter! appear then
From your father's gardens, and if you may not come
As a spirit of the earth, frighten, o
Only frighten my heart with another face.]

Like most of the Hölderlin odes Eisler set, the poem is based in Alcaic meter. In German, the Alcaic strophe begins with two asymmetrically stressed eleven-syllable lines broken by a caesura

³⁴¹ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 316-317.

between an unstressed and stressed beat, followed by nine- and ten-syllable lines with no caesura:

~ / ~ / ~ | / ~ ~ / ~ /
 ~ / ~ / ~ | / ~ ~ / ~ /
 ~ / ~ / ~ / ~ / ~
 / ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ / ~

Alcaic poetry oscillates between duple and triple meter; with most of its lines beginning on an unstressed syllable, the initial “heartbeat” iambic pace breaks into dactylic acceleration and swing. In musical terms, this metric pattern begins on an upbeat in the first four lines. Its asymmetry follows speech rhythm; unlike the irregular meters of much Eastern European folk music in 5/8 or 7/8 time, it moves forward with a thinking-aloud quality rather than a syncopated dance pattern. Hölderlin’s intimate knowledge of ancient Greek, in which vowel length and not stress animates metrical movement, gives his odes a quality of acoustic translation. For example, the Alcaic pattern of three long syllables is typically adapted in German into stressed-unstressed-stressed form, lightening a fairly weighty line. Hölderlin also gives the poem a particularly German sonority with slant, internal, and end-rhyme, as well as alliteration (e.g. “Mitternacht”/ “unsichtbare” and “Schatten”/ “schlummert”/ “schaudernde”³⁴²). By indenting each line further than the last, as is typical for his work in this period, he increases the poem’s forward movement across the page – while at the same time breaking it visually with white space. Enjambment after prepositions and adjectives, in addition to invocatory phrases halted by commas, adds to a sense of textual fragility that can easily be missed when reading the poem for sonority and flow, as Heidegger did. This breakable quality becomes more apparent in Eisler’s fragmentation and musical setting.

³⁴² Ibid.

“An die Hoffnung” reads as a halting plea or invocation, as the speaker mourns his already waning life force, despite his youth. He identifies with the shadows in the Underworld and senses his marginal status in a familiar autumn landscape. Hölderlin’s lyric “I” experiences time as lapse or loss, even as it passes for others in its agrarian cycle or liturgical verticality.³⁴³ This disturbed relationship to time is itself a caesura. The speaker ends by asking “Aether’s daughter” to appear, if not as an earthly spirit, then to frighten his heart differently, as something other or foreign. In the poem’s first draft, Hölderlin refers to this “anderem” or “other” as “Unsterblichem”³⁴⁴ [“immortal”], heightening the difference between worlds and states of being. Like many Hölderlin poems, this one voices a deep pessimism amid its plea toward hope. The speaker’s heart shudders in its shadow-life, even as earthly beauty surrounds him. The poem’s nature images seem to lose their effectiveness³⁴⁵ even in the act of naming them. This thematic fragility is mitigated by remaining hope in the final stanza, which Eisler breaks off entirely.

Reducing the poem to two stanzas, cutting the fourth line after the word “waltest,” and suspending it with a colon, Eisler leaves speaker/singer and reader/listener without real hope of finding Hope at all. Hölderlin’s “zwischen” [“between”] now refers to the mortals themselves, not to a movement between them and “heavenly powers.” Exposing the fragile point between worlds in the poem, Eisler de-sacralizes the poem’s geography with one blow. The speaking subject is left repeating “Wo bist du?” in an alienating space:

O Hoffnung! holde! gütiggeschäftige!
Die du das Haus der Trauernden nicht verschmähst,
Und gerne dienend, zwischen
Sterblichen waltest:

³⁴³ Thomas Pfau, seminar lecture, Duke University, 17 February 2014.

³⁴⁴ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 825.

³⁴⁵ Pfau, seminar lecture.

Wo bist du? Wo bist du? wenig lebt' ich; doch atmet kalt
Mein Abend schon. Und stille, den Schatten gleich,
Bin ich schon hier; und schon gesanglos
Schlummert das schauernde Herz.³⁴⁶

Eisler's focus on the "house of sorrow" and the "shuddering heart" in the poem's early lines, rather than on the lush landscape and possibility of Hope's appearance in the final stanzas, locates the new poem far more clearly in the elegiac mode. The fragment's setting in the larger elegiac framework of the song cycle, and of the *Hollywooder Liederbuch* itself, casts the poem in a darker light as well, a clear example of Eisler's respectfully contrary stance toward his source texts. Referring to Hölderlin's "Gesang des Deutschen," to be treated later in this chapter, he said,

Intelligenz bezieht sich nicht nur auf die Auswahl der Texte, sondern auch darauf, wie man sie behandelt. Wenn ich mich mit dem Text völlig identifiziere, mich einfühle, ihm nachschwebe – na, das ist ganz scheußlich. Einen Text muß ein Komponist erst einmal widerspruchsvoll ansehen.³⁴⁷

[Intelligence relates not only to the choice of texts but also to how one treats them. If I completely identify with a text, empathize, float along in it – no, that's just atrocious. A composer must first look at a text in a contrarian way.]

In "An die Hoffnung," Eisler's truncating of each strophe's last line breaks the Alcaic pattern, leaving a lacuna, broader than a caesura, in place of "und Himmelmächten" and "im Busen." Removing Hölderlin's "Edle!" shortens and speeds the line leading there as well. The new poem itself works as parataxis – not far from what Adorno recognized as Hölderlin's musical sense of forms emerging from syntactic links and breaks:

Unter Parataxen sind aber nicht nur, eng, die mikrologischen Gestalten reihenden Übergangs zu denken. Wie in Musik ergreift die Tendenz größere Strukturen. Hölderlin kennt Formen, die, in erweitertem Sinn, insgesamt parataktisch heißen dürften.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 59-60.

³⁴⁷ Bunge, 192.

³⁴⁸ Adorno, "Parataxis," 473.

[Parataxes ask for more than the narrow consideration of micrological shapes linked one after another. As in music, the tendency reaches toward larger structures. Hölderlin understood forms that, in the wider sense, could be called paratactic in their entirety.]

Here in Eisler's stanza break, Hölderlin's already paratactic syntax has a wider gap to cross; in addition, the meaning of the line before the stanza break has changed. Rather than seeing Hope as a mediatrix between mortals and gods, Eisler has made her a shadow among shadows, a presence as marginal as the speaker/singer who has lost the very voice with which he can call out to her. Political exile, the context for Eisler's radical adaptation, begins to sound more frightening than encounters with the beyond-human. This truncated poem reaches the heart of Hölderlin's own dilemma, in a very different historical moment: "it is not that the world no longer exists, but how does modern consciousness structure itself, with this sense of loss?"³⁴⁹ By cutting away the poem's vertical dimension, Eisler secularizes the work of a poet freighted under fascism with a mystical bent far beyond the mourning for vanished divinities.

In the second poem set in Eisler's cycle, "Andenken" ["Remembrance"], written after Hölderlin's 1802 stay in Bordeaux,³⁵⁰ the speaker recalls a physical journey and the reflective world depicted earlier in *Hyperion*. "Andenken" contains some of Hölderlin's best-known lines, the aphoristic "Es nehmet aber/ Und gibt Gedächtnis die See" ["But in the sea is memory/ taken and given"] marked by Paul Celan shortly before his suicide by drowning, and the equally gnomic and often-cited "Was bleibt aber, stiften die Dichter"³⁵¹ ["But what remains, the poets set down"]. Hanns Eisler cuts the poem far in advance of these concluding lines, well aware of

³⁴⁹ Pfau, seminar lecture.

³⁵⁰ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 1013.

³⁵¹ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 362.

their cultural freight. He breaks the poem's triadic structure but generally keeps its "free" Pindaric meter, taken up in the eighteenth century by Klopstock and his followers "als Muster der elementar-naturhaften, regellos-enthusiastischen 'hohen Ode'"³⁵² [as a pattern for the elemental-natural, unregulated-enthusiastic 'high ode'"]. Only later in the nineteenth century were Pindar's complex Greek meters decoded. Hölderlin's "translations" of Pindaric form depart from their earlier reception, as it fed the "manierenden Irrationalismus der Geniezeit"³⁵³ ["mannered irrationalism of the Genius-epoch"]. He uses the form instead as a model for new modes of poetic speech, among them the frequent use of "aber," which can be traced to Pindar's use of the Greek "δέ" as a rhythmic-narrative device,³⁵⁴ to direct a poem on its own erratic path. The metric irregularity of "Andenken" also allows for breakage between short and long lines, as well as for surprising enjambment. Hölderlin's characteristic ending of a clause with "mir" ["to/for me"] stumbles into the third line's opening beat, for example, and the conjunctions "und" and "aber" remain suspended at the end of a line. These metric shifts likely held particular appeal for Hanns Eisler, who favored such destabilizing moves in his own music, from the 2/4 break in the "Solidaritätslied" to the sudden 5/4 shift in his early Heine choruses. As will be shown in the next section, his setting of "Andenken" moves from 2/4 to 3/4 and then to 6/8 time, heightening the sense of fragile metric links throughout the poem.

Eisler's cuts to "Andenken" leave only the first two stanzas, with internal excisions, "Nacht und Tag" reversed, and the first four lines of the second stanza removed. Heidegger's take on the poem marks the "Nordost" wind with the same word he used to describe "das

³⁵² Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 506.

³⁵³ Ibid. 507.

³⁵⁴ See Hans-Dieter Jünger, "Eine einzige Fuge des aber ... : Sein und Erinnern bei Hölderlin und Heidegger – Eine Notiz zu den späten pindarischen Andenken-Gesängen," *artefact text and translation* (Cologne: 2000), <http://www.artefact.org/fugeaber/fugeabr3.html>. Web, accessed 24 October 2014.

Offene”: “heilig” or “holy,”³⁵⁵ a mystical-nationalistic inflection Eisler avoids in his quick, speechlike setting of that phrase. What remains of this poetic memory is a de-sacralized image of Bordeaux, missing the rest of the poetic narrative, a spiritual journey to the East.

Der Nordost wehet,
Der liebste unter den Winden
Mir, weil er gute Fahrt verheißet.
Geh aber nun, grüße
Die schöne Garonne,
Und die Gärten von Bordeaux
Dort, wo am scharfen Ufer
Hingehet der Steg und in den Strom
Tief fällt der Bach, darüber aber
Hinschauet ein edel Paar
Von Eichen und Silberpappeln;

An Feiertagen gehn
Die braunen Frauen daselbst
Auf seidnen Boden,
Zur Märzzeit,
Wenn gleich ist Tag und Nacht,
Und über langsamen Stegen,
Von goldenen Träumen schwer,
Einwiegende Lüfte ziehen.³⁵⁶

[The Northeast blows,
dearest of winds
to me, for it augurs a good voyage.
But go now and greet
beautiful Garonne,
and the gardens of Bordeaux
there, where the bridge planks lead
to the steep bank and the stream
plunges into the current, yet
a noble pair of oaks and silver poplars
look down from above.

On holidays
the dark women walk
on silky ground

³⁵⁵ Heidegger, “Hölderlins Hymne ‘Andenken,’” 48-50. See also Kreuzer, 433.

³⁵⁶ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 61-63.

in March,
when day and night are equal,
while over slow bridges
breezes rock and waft,
heavy with golden dreams.]

What is this fragmented poem's function, as part of a cycle focused on such charged German tropes as "Heimat," "Heidelberg," and "Vaterland"? Perhaps a key lies in another "garden poem" set by Eisler in the *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, Bertolt Brecht's "Vom Sprengen des Gartens," about watering the thirsty trees and even the weeds, giving them more than enough.³⁵⁷ For Brecht and Eisler, the comfortable California coast, with its lawns and garden hoses, must have exuded a dissonant sense of luxury, not unlike the gardens of Bordeaux Hölderlin associated with foreignness and free-thinking, perhaps recalling the France of his own Jacobin sympathies, in a time before political disillusionment. For Eisler, a warm Mediterranean climate promised some of the hope painfully lacking in "An die Hoffnung," hope for a refuge in which to write music for those who might someday welcome it. In the autograph score of "Andenken," Eisler noted, "In einer Gesellschaft, die ein solches Liederbuch versteht und liebt, wird es sich gut und gefahrlos leben lassen. Im Vertrauen auf eine solche sind diese Stücke geschrieben"³⁵⁸ ["In a society that understands and loves such a songbook, it will be allowed to live well and safely. These pieces are written with trust in such a society"]. Next to this foreword he wrote, echoing the discussion of Konrad Beissel's musical strictures in Thomas Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus* of the same period,³⁵⁹ "P.S. Was kann Musik, nebst vielen andern für die Zukunft tun?"

³⁵⁷ Ibid. 77.

³⁵⁸ Hanns Eisler, "Andenken," autograph draft, Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste Berlin, Hanns-Eisler-Archiv, Sign. 319.

³⁵⁹ See Thomas Mann, *Doktor Faustus*, 103-105.

Sie kann helfen falsche Tonfülle zu vermeiden”³⁶⁰ [“P.S. What can music, along with other things, do for the future? It can help to avoid false sonorities”]. In the autograph, however, Eisler’s furious pencil-scratches cover both of these inscriptions almost entirely,³⁶¹ showing his conflicted attitude toward society’s capacity to welcome his music and toward music’s ability to intervene in its misappropriation.

The third poem re-functioned in Eisler’s cycle is “Der Frieden.” Its new title “Elegie 1943” locates it among Eisler’s other elegiac settings in the 1930s and 40s. Hölderlin’s poem is dated 1799 and appears to have been only partly finished, with lacunae in the first and seventh strophes.³⁶² It is an ode in Alcaic meter with a symmetrical six-three-six structure, the first six strophes depicting war, the three central stanzas invoking peace, and the last six reaching toward a common human harmony with nature,³⁶³ not unlike the conclusion of *Hyperion*. The poem emerged from the War of the Second Coalition period, in which French troops pushed back against conservative European monarchies; bloody conflicts in Italy and Switzerland, and the British-Russian invasion of Holland, led Hölderlin to write his mother in September 1799 of his hope for peace: “Ich hoffe den Frieden von Herzen, und halte ihn auch aus den allgemeinsten Gründen für nötig und heilsam und von unabsehlicher Wichtigkeit. Vielleicht ist er auch so entfernt nicht, als es scheint”³⁶⁴ [“I hope in my heart for peace, and hold it on the most universal grounds as necessary and wholesome and of more importance than we can foresee. Perhaps it is

³⁶⁰ Eisler, “Andenken,” autograph draft. See also Wißmann, 155-156.

³⁶¹ Eisler, “Andenken,” autograph draft.

³⁶² Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 644.

³⁶³ *Ibid.* 645.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

not so remote as it appears”]. In “Der Frieden,” Hölderlin’s fragile reach toward hope leads toward a vision of Mother Earth’s comforts and a gods’-eye perspective on human striving; as Peter Szondi notes, Hölderlin’s tone in this period “wird persönlicher und zugleich unpersönlicher”³⁶⁵ [“becomes more personal and at the same time less personal”]. Eisler’s settings highlight this less personal aspect of Hölderlin’s lyric “I,” not in a transcendent sense, but rather by anonymizing places named in the poems, and by locating – or dis-locating – the speaker as a distanced, contingent presence.

In his adaptation of “Der Frieden,” Eisler removes seven stanzas describing battle and the poem’s entire final section, in addition to cutting individual lines, usually subordinate clauses. These deep cuts render Hölderlin’s parataxis even more frangible. In unlikely word clusters such as “Dunkel und Blässe”³⁶⁶ [“darkness and pallor”] or “wild ist und verzagt und kalt”³⁶⁷ [“is wild and rueful and cold”], the small word “und” does the paratactic work of both linking and separating clauses. Here is the remaining fragment:

Wie wenn die alten Wasser,
 in andern Zorn
In schrecklichern verwandelt wieder
Kämen,

So gärt’ und wuchs und wogte von Jahr zu Jahr
Die unerhörte Schlacht, daß weit hüllt
In Dunkel und Blässe das Haupt der Menschen.

Wer brachte den Fluch? Von heut
Ist er nicht und nicht von gestern. Und die zuerst
Das Maß verloren, unsre Väter
Wußten es nicht.

³⁶⁵ Szondi, 290.

³⁶⁶ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 227.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 229.

Zu lang, zu lang schon treten die Sterblichen
Sich gern aufs Haupt,
Den Nachbar fürchtend.

Und unstedt irren und wirren, dem Chaos gleich,
Dem gärenden Geschlecht die Wünsche nach
Und wild ist und verzagt und kalt von
Sorgen das Leben.³⁶⁸

[As if the old waters that
in another rage
Came transformed again into terror,

So the unheard battle seethed and grew and rocked
from year to year,
spreading darkness and pallor over human heads.

Who brought the curse? Not from today
Or from yesterday, and those who first
Lost balance, our fathers
did not know.

Too long, too long already, mortals have gladly
Trampled each other,
Fearing their neighbor.

And like chaos, wishes of the simmering race
Still veer and roil;
Life is always wild and rueful
And cold with cares.]

Besides cutting the poem's optimistic ending to conclude with some of its most troubling lines, Eisler makes internal cuts and changes that leave the poem's form almost unrecognizable. Except for those in the final stanza, most lines now read as syntactically straightforward utterances, some end-stopped in matter-of-fact cadences. Eisler conventionalizes Hölderlin's verb "gählen,"³⁶⁹ most likely related to the Swabian "gehlen," indicating intense swelling;³⁷⁰ the new

³⁶⁸ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 64-66.

³⁶⁹ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 227.

word, “gären” [“ferment” or “seethe”] can be translated similarly into English. In a bolder move, Eisler uses the phrase “irren und wirren”³⁷¹ [“err/wander and veer”] in place of “wehn und irren,”³⁷² a citation of Heinrich Heine’s “Aus alten Märchen winkt es.” This send-up of fairytale language was set frenetically by Robert Schumann in the *Dichterliebe*, one of the sources Eisler parodies, in the formal sense, in his Hölderlin cycle. The word “irren” is associated with madness or error, “wirren” with turmoil, often the chaos of war. Heine removed this malevolent-sounding strophe from the second edition of his poem, to foreground its faux sweetness more effectively; Schumann restored it, to give his song a darker cast. For Eisler, drawing on Schumann’s song cycles as he set Hölderlin, this re-contextualized wordplay adds a moment of estrangement, recalling a land as lost to the speaker as the fairytale world was to Heine. This trace of another poet’s voice also contributes to the less personal and more plural, even novelistic space of the adapted poem. In the sense of Bakhtin’s take on polyphony in the novel, this aspect of Eisler’s setting echoes Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* in Adrian Leverkühn’s composite voice, as inspired by Nietzsche, Schoenberg, and Adorno in his advisory role throughout the novel’s composition.³⁷³

Eisler’s choice to set Hölderlin’s “Die Heimat,” the cycle’s fourth poem, shows his insistence on reclaiming and working in close friction with the poet’s most insidiously appropriated words. He chose the first, shorter version of Hölderlin’s poem (1798), which ends with an unanswered question, rather than the extended meditation on home-comforts and love-

³⁷⁰ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 646.

³⁷¹ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 66. See also Robert Schumann and Heinrich Heine, *Dichterliebe* (Leipzig: Edition Peters), 31.

³⁷² Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 229.

³⁷³ Thanks to Eric Downing for this note, Carolina-Duke Dissertation Colloquium, 25 February 2016.

sorrow that concludes the 1800 version, reflective of the poet's separation from his "Diotima," Susette Gontard. The earlier poem is part of a series of short odes in which Hölderlin practiced his aphoristic mode of expression. "Die Heimat" is the one Hölderlin poem Eisler set almost in its entirety, with several small cuts and changes. Its brevity as a two-stanza Alcaic poem makes it already a fragment, supporting Eisler's overall project; in addition, because of the extended time a poem takes when sung, shortness appealed to the composer writing each piece as part of a longer cycle. For Hölderlin, the idea of a truncated poem was well within his era's aesthetic range, considering Friedrich Schlegel's famous description, in his own aphoristic *Athenäum* (also written at the turn of the nineteenth century) of the fragment "in sich selbst vollendet ... wie ein Igel"³⁷⁴ ["complete in itself ... like a hedgehog"]. Though some of Hölderlin's short poems in this series do read like gnomic utterances sufficient in themselves, "Die Heimat" remains unresolved, both stanzas ending in rhetorical questions, with a Dickinson-like dash inscribing an additional caesura after the first.

Rich with internal rhyme and "Liebe"/ "Leid" chiasmus (also paired in Hölderlin's "Abendphantasie"), the poem is itself a musical experience. Metric fragility destabilizes this poem, however, as it does the odes Eisler set. Lines halted with commas, semicolons, question and exclamation marks, and the telltale dash keep the Alcaic meter from rolling forward with its usual momentum. At first glance, Eisler seems to keep the poem intact except for the following changes: "stillen Strom" becomes "hellen Strome" ["bright rivers"], emphasizing visual stimulation over aural peace; "auch" is removed in the second line; the reference to love's sorrow in the second stanza is cut, to make the poem's problem less individual; and "komme"

³⁷⁴ Hans Eichner, ed., *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*. Volume 2 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 197.

becomes, significantly for the exiled composer, “wiederkehre” [“return again”].³⁷⁵ That the word “wieder” now occurs three times in this short poem, twice in quick succession at the end, intensifies the pull toward return. More subtle changes to meter and punctuation, however, add to the fragmented quality of the poem, end-stopping lines Hölderlin suspended with semicolons, adding unstressed beats such as “möchte” or removing them (“Aber” becomes “ach”) to unsettle the poem’s walking beat, and turning the repeated central question into a statement. The adapted “Heimat” reads as follows:

Froh kehrt der Schiffer heim an die hellen Strome
von fernen Inseln, wo er geerntet hat.
Wohl möchte auch ich zur Heimat wieder.
Ach was hab` ich, wie Leid, geerntet?
Ach was hab` ich, wie Leid, geerntet?

Ihr holden Ufer, die ihr mich auferzogt,
ach! gebt ihr mir,
Wälder meiner Kindheit, wann ich wiederkehre,
die Ruhe noch Einmal wieder.

[Happily the boatman turns toward home on the quiet river
From distant islands, where he has been harvesting;
I would gladly turn toward home as well;
But what have I harvested but sorrow?
But what have I harvested but sorrow?

You lovely banks where I was raised,
Ah, give me,
When I come, my childhood’s woods, when I return,
And peace once again.]

Eisler is hardly toning down the drawing power of “Heimat” in the “Blut und Boden” era; his adaptation frankly reclaims the word in all its resonance. His disruption of the textual flow gives the poem a stumbling movement weighted toward the end of lines, however; this homeland has

³⁷⁵ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 67-68.

become a burden. In addition, the new poem's frequent rhythmic stoppage mirrors its larger, aphoristic form, reflecting the modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and montage.

The fifth Hölderlin poem in Eisler's cycle is "Heidelberg," with the new, anonymized title "An eine Stadt" ["To a City"]. The poem, in the Pindaric tradition of the city ode,³⁷⁶ dates from 1800 and carries associations with Hölderlin's mother and with his intellectual formation in Heidelberg. Unlike the other poems Eisler set, most in Alcaic meter, this one is in the more symmetrical Asclepiadean form, with its caesura interrupting a spondee (in its German metric adaptation). Asclepiadean lines also begin on stressed beats, giving the poem a marked drive. The poem's weighted momentum makes its caesuras easiest to track where marked by commas (e.g. "gesandt, fesselt"³⁷⁷). Asclepiadean lines are symmetrical, the first two in each stanza carrying a predictable beat; the Asclepiadean strophe ends with two shorter lines, the first asymmetrical and stacked before the caesura, giving each stanza a disintegrating quality. Once again, internal rhyme and alliteration create a resonant sound-world of language materials, musical language that, even before set as song, can be thought of as "transmedial" in Lars Elleström's sense of media similarity.³⁷⁸ Albrecht Betz has described Hölderlin's language as "rhythmisiertes Sprechen, das tönt und atmet, sie ist voller musikalischer Bilder und dialektischer Gedankbewegungen" ["rhythmic speech that chimes and breathes, it is full of musical images

³⁷⁶ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 670.

³⁷⁷ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 242.

³⁷⁸ See Lars Elleström, ed. *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 12. Irina Rajewsky has noted the "traveling" character of artistic elements such as rhythm, which can occur in various media, while also carefully distinguishing such elements from those that do not travel easily, such as the material associativity of music. Irina Rajewsky, Intermediality Seminar, Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden, 17 December 2014.

and dialectical thought-movements”], which Eisler understood as “Hegelian,”³⁷⁹ and likely influenced the synthetic dialectics of his text-setting. As Walter Benjamin observed in a 1916 essay, the non-semantic quality of language, “Sprachmagie,” works a kind of enchantment,³⁸⁰ very much like the spell binding the young man to the bridge, however far his journey takes him from his “mother-city.” Hölderlin’s sound- and image-fields are so rich with internal echoes and contrasts, especially when his poems are read aloud, it is not surprising that his work was co-opted by Expressionist poets and nationalist propagandists looking for a compelling “soundtrack” to evoke a beautiful homeland of mountains, rivers, and forests.

If a spell can also be a curse, whoever “brought” it, breaking this enchantment became Hanns Eisler’s project, even as he used the poet’s own musical language to do so. His fragment of “Heidelberg” keeps the reference to “Zauber” [“magic”] but removes its divine origin and the city’s name – in Benjamin’s sense of creating by calling, a magic word in its own right. Eisler also breaks the poem’s “spell” through metrical and musical means. His fragment reads thus:

Lange lieb` ich dich schon, möchte dich, mir zur Lust,
Mutter nennen, und dir schenken ein kunstloses Lied,
Du, der Vaterlandsstädte
Ländlichschönste, so viel ich sah.

Wie der Vogel des Walds über die Gipfel fliegt,
Schwingt sich über den Strom, wo er vorbei dir glänzt,
Leicht und kräftig die Brücke,
Die von Wagen und Menschen tönt.

Da ich vorüber ging, fesselt` der Zauber auch mich,
Und herein in die Berge
Mir die reizende Ferne schien,

³⁷⁹ Albrecht Betz, “Eisler und Hölderlin in Hollywood.” In *Hanns Eisler der Zeitgenosse: Positionen – Perspektiven*. Materialien zu den Eisler-Festen 1994/95, ed. Günter Mayer (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1997), 79.

³⁸⁰ See Walter Benjamin, “Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II-1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), 140-157.

Du hattest dem Flüchtigen
Kühlenden Schatten geschenkt, und die Gestade sahen
Ihm alle nach, und es tönte
Aus den Wellen das liebliche Bild.

Sträucher blühten herab, bis wo im heitern Tal,
An den Hügel gelehnt, oder dem Ufer hold,
Deine fröhlichen Gassen
Unter duftenden Gärten ruhn.³⁸¹

[Long have I loved you, and would like, for my pleasure,
To call you "Mother," and to give you an artless song,
You, loveliest city of the Fatherland,
Of all I have seen.

As the forest bird flies over the peaks,
So swings the bridge, light and strong, noisy with wagons
And people, over the river
Gleaming past you.

A spell once bound me, as I crossed over
And into the mountains
The lovely distance appeared,

You gave the wanderer
Cool shade, and the shores looked
After him, and your dear image
Trembled out from the waves.

Shrubs bloomed, down where in the cheerful valley
Where, leaned into the hills or touching the shore,
Your happy streets
Rest under fragrant gardens.]

Eisler's dis-enchantment of the text occurs in numerous metrical changes, for example a rewriting of "Quellen hattest du, ihm, hattest dem Flüchtigen" as the more direct "Du hast dem Flüchtigen kühlenden Schatten geschenkt." Though this move can be seen as an effort to preserve "optimal comprehensibility of the language,"³⁸² Eisler's breakdown of the Asclepiadean

³⁸¹ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 69-72.

³⁸² Stanley E. Workman, *Hanns Eisler and His Hollywood Songbook: A Survey of the Five*

meter also disrupts the Greek-German link in Hölderlin and his later reception, particularly in Heidegger's readings. Eisler also re-orders some of Hölderlin's words, linking the enchantment (here "the" not "a" from of magic, as if well known) to the act of crossing the bridge, rather than to the bridge itself. As the speaker moves *away* from the city, he is caught in its spell. As in the source text, the city continues to protect the traveler with shade and, in Eisler's version, with an almost synaesthetic memory, the new word "tönte" ["tinted"] related to "chime" and "sound" as well. Juxtaposing the shortened fifth and the final stanza, without the iconic image of the Heidelberg castle in between, Eisler further anonymizes the city, which remains at the wanderer's back, resting or even arrested as if in a landscape painting. This image, suspended in the river as it is in time, seems untouched by the horrors of war, though Eisler's music works against that state of rest.

The final poem adapted in the cycle is Hölderlin's "Gesang des Deutschen" ["Song of the German"] with its title changed to "Erinnerung" ["Memory"]. Written to honor the birthday of Princess Auguste von Homburg in 1799, the poem emerged from Hölderlin's disappointment in the French Revolution's aftermath and from his remaining hope for more measured political change in the German states. As the Duke of Württemberg and other German princes pushed back against their own citizens' republican leanings, many progressives retreated into hopes for spiritual-cultural rather than political revolution;³⁸³ Hölderlin did not give up his vision for outward change but voiced, in his poetry directed toward the nobility, a wider vision. On a separate page also titled "Gesang des Deutschen," the poet wrote these lines from Horace:

Elegies and the Hölderlin Fragments, D.M.A. Document, Ohio State University, 2010, 44.

³⁸³ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 634.

Vis consilii expers mole ruit sua;
Vim temperatam Di quoque provehunt
Im majus.³⁸⁴

[Force without spiritual governance collapses under its own weight; restrained force leads even the gods to greatness.]

This Alcaic poem follows a symmetrical three-part structure, beginning with a focus on Germany, reaching back toward ancient Greece in the middle section, and returning to Germany at the end, with questioning hope for a Greek-inspired civic-cosmopolitan future for art, scholarship, and industry.

In his well-known Hölderlin study *Hälfte des Lebens*, Winfried Menninghaus notes the poet's theory of beauty as an attempt to bridge subject and object, self and world,³⁸⁵ also part of Heidegger's philosophical project in the next century. In his later poems, as mental collapse became imminent, Hölderlin's usual plasticity and balance between the near and far began to break down.³⁸⁶ Already in "Gesang des Deutschen," distance keeps overcoming the speaker, even in the opening stanza, which places him in a bird's-eye-view position looking down over his homeland. With its Alcaic lines shifting between walking and dance movement, and with its past tense and Greek references tugging backward, the poem refuses grounding in a present German landscape. The speaker praising his Fatherland is alienated from it before he begins. The lines "Oft zürnt' ich weinend, daß du immer/ Blöde die eigene Seele leugnest"³⁸⁷ ["Often I raged at you, weeping, that you always/ Stupidly gainsay your own soul"] make this position clear.

³⁸⁴ Ibid. 633.

³⁸⁵ Winfried Menninghaus, *Hälfte des Lebens: Versuch über Hölderlins Poetik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), 65-67.

³⁸⁶ Ibid. 67.

³⁸⁷ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 224.

Invoking the children of Minerva/Athena, the poet sees potential for wisdom-driven growth and change in the German-speaking lands. That the poem ends with impatient-sounding rhetorical questions, however, after invoking the Fatherland's patience in its opening stanza, amplifies the undertow of pessimism that pulls even at Hölderlin's praise-songs.

Eisler's version of the poem adds to its inherent temporal displacement with its new title, "Erinnerung" ["Memory"]. Because Eisler frames all of his Hölderlin settings in the elegiac mode, it is helpful to note the distancing aspect of this genre – not in the elegy's formal sense, according to the Greek model of the hexameter-pentameter distichon, but its thematic application in the European poetic tradition of mourning-poetry. As Ane Martine Lönneker has pointed out, elegiac utterance "tones feeling down" by evoking it through a "re-echoing" of the experience of loss, an idea common in eighteenth-century German poetics.³⁸⁸ Eisler's "Erinnerung" fragment highlights the speaker's past-tense stance ("Oft stand ich" ["Often I stood"]) near the poem's new center-point, as the homeland images unfold from equal spatial distance. Eisler retains the opening line but removes the central and final sections, along with several stanzas describing Germany. Here is the fragmented poem:

O heilig Herz der Völker, o Vaterland!
Allduldend, gleich der schweigenden Mutter Erd',
Und allverkannt, wenn schon aus deiner
Tiefe die Fremden ihr Bestes haben!

Sie ernten den Gedanken, den Geist von dir,
Sie pflücken gern die Traube, doch höhnen sie
Dich, ungestalte Rebe! daß du
Schwankend den Boden und wild umirrst.

Doch magst du manches Schöne nicht bergen mir;
Oft stand ich überschauend das holde Grün,
Den weiten Garten hoch in deinen
Lüften auf hellem Gebirg' und sah dich.

³⁸⁸ Ane Martine Lönneker, "The Peculiar Case of Elegiac Feeling: Genre, Rhythm, Affect," conference talk, Words and Music Association Forum, Aarhus, Denmark, 14 November 2014.

Und an den Ufern sah ich die Städte blühn,
Die Edlen, wo der Fleiß in der Werkstatt schweigt,
Die Wissenschaft, wo deine Sonne
Milde dem Künstler zum Ernste leuchtet.³⁸⁹

[O the peoples' holy heart, o Fatherland!
All-patient, like the quiet Mother Earth,
And all-misunderstood, when from your depths
Strangers have taken the best of you!

They harvest your thoughts, your very spirit,
They love to pick the grapes, and yet they sneer
At you, still-unformed vine! that you
Wander and falter along the ground.

Yet you do not hide from me a portion of your beauty;
Often I stood overlooking the lovely green,
The wide garden, high in your
Bright mountain breezes, and saw you.

And I saw the cities blooming up on the shores,
The noble ones, with quiet, busy workshops,
And scholarly study, where your sun
Lights the artist's way toward weighty thought.]

Most notably missing are Hölderlin's references to Greece, revealing their link to German history and culture to be more easily breakable than they often appear in the poet's work. Here Eisler achieves the same distancing from the German-Greek connection as he did in "An eine Stadt," this time through thematic absence as much as through metric disruption. The new poem focuses on the alien influences that have stolen what is best in Germany. For Hölderlin, this meant the French Revolution turned savagely against itself and on its neighbors, inciting similar violent impulses in them. For Eisler this likely meant both German humiliation in Soviet territory and poisonous influences closer to home, the National Socialist drive foreign to the Germany he

³⁸⁹ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 73-75.

knew – and to which he still belonged. In his 1961 conversations with Hans Bunge, he described his dialectically fraught project this way:

Das war ungefähr um die Zeit von Stalingrad ... Sie, lieber Doktor Bunge, saßen, glaube ich, irgendwo in einem Gefangenenlager in der Sowjetunion, und ich saß in Hollywood. Es ging mir sehr gut, finanziell. Aber es wurmte mich, daß diese armen Deutschen solche Scheißkerle sind und waren. Sie waren Scheißkerle.

... Es hat mich gereizt in der Stunde der tiefsten Erniedrigung dieses deutschen Volkes, dem ich ja leider angehöre ... ich kann ja nicht austreten. Ich muß sagen, es war völlig taktlos, so etwas zu komponieren. Zum Beispiel als gerade die Russen an der Oder waren, sagte ich: ‘Sie ernten ... Rebe!’ – eine Geschmacklosigkeit, so etwas zu komponieren. Ich habe es komponiert. Wissen Sie, warum? Das gehört zur Dialektik des Künstlers. Ich sage mir, wenn ich zurückkomme, will ich sagen: “Ihr Scheißkerle! Aber immerhin habe ich für euch komponiert!”³⁹⁰

[This was around the time of Stalingrad ... You, dear Doctor Bunge, sat, I believe, somewhere in a prison camp in the Soviet Union, and I sat in Hollywood. Things were going very well for me, financially. But it rankled me, that these poor Germans are and were such shithheads. They were shithheads.

It exasperated me, that in the hour of the deepest humiliation of the German people, to which I unfortunately belong ... I can't escape it. I must say, it was completely tactless, to compose something like this. For example, just as the Russians were on the Oder, I said, ‘They harvest ... the vine!’ – what tastelessness, to compose something like this. I composed it. Do you know why? This belongs to the artist's dialectic. I say to myself, when I come back, I want to say: “You shithheads! But I've composed something for you anyway.”]

By writing this text-setting for those “Scheißkerle” anyway, Eisler addressed both the homeland he remembered and the murderous state it had become. This fragment actually ends – and also ends the song cycle as a whole – on what first appears to be a more hopeful note than in its source poem. The speaker surveys the land that does not hide its beauty from him, for all its betrayals, and shows its blooming cities, industrious workers, and the light of art and science lit gently by Germany's sun. Eisler's setting tests whether that vision is worthy of hope in 1943.

³⁹⁰ Bunge, 194-195.

Ghost songs

The young Theodor Adorno referred in 1929 to Eisler's *Zeitungsausschnitte* (*Newspaper Clippings*), written in the same period as his Heine choruses, as "negative Lyrik"³⁹¹ in its use of prose-montage to counter the tradition of poetic language set to music. This term came with Adorno's somewhat dubious assessment of the work as aesthetically compromised, in its effort to be politically responsible. Fifteen years later in Los Angeles, when he, Thomas Mann, and others heard Eisler's Hollywood songs in the composer's home, Adorno had a much more positive response.³⁹² Though he did not refer to these fragmented nineteenth-century poems as "negative Lyrik," the term is useful in a material sense: Eisler's Hölderlin settings do not directly counter the lyric tradition but rather work as negative-images of nineteenth-century German Lieder, conveying the "Stimmung" of the song-recital experience from a ghostly, unsettling distance. Albrecht Betz has described the cycle in terms of "vielfache Distanz" ["multifold distance"], and Eisler's compositional goal as "Abstand zur Poesie herstellen und ihn wahren, kompositorisch das Zitierte ergänzen und interpretieren, wechselseitig den Text durch die Musik transparent machen" ["To create and keep a distance from the poetry, compositionally to fill out and interpret what is cited, while reciprocally to make the text transparent through the music"], rather than employing conventionally "psychological" text-to-music doubling.³⁹³ Though Brecht praised Eisler for "freeing" Hölderlin from plaster ("vom Gips ... befreit"³⁹⁴), and though Manfred Grabs has argued that nothing of "atmosphere" remains after Eisler's drastic textual

³⁹¹ See Theodor Adorno, *Anbruch*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 18 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), 524-527.

³⁹² Workman, 17.

³⁹³ Betz, "Eisler und Hölderlin in Hollywood," in Mayer, 79.

³⁹⁴ Bunge, 66.

cuts,³⁹⁵ the songs' Hegelian dialectic subsumes their breaks and dissonances into a lyric mood at once familiar and estranging.

Musical analysis of Eisler's songs requires some background on the German song tradition, particularly the music of Robert Schumann. In light of Eisler's reclaiming of Hölderlin in the 1940s, it is important to bear in mind that Schumann's music was co-opted under National Socialism with no less enthusiasm than Hölderlin's poetry was.³⁹⁶ In addition, Eisler tended toward acerbic criticism of most German Lieder singers' interpretations of classic songs, even until late in his life in early-1960s East Berlin. Not only had these works been politically misappropriated, but they were also routinely "mißverstanden" ["misunderstood"] as "sentimentales Geschmalze" ["sentimental mush"] or as "Unterhaltungsmusik" ["entertainment music"], a problem Eisler associated with violence, calling it "Barbarei" ["barbarity"].³⁹⁷ Composing Schumann-inflected songs gave Eisler a charged medium through which to reclaim and at the same time estrange German cultural material. That said, as Lawrence Kramer has pointed out, the Lieder tradition already carries a "weightlessness" as it "works by abstracting from an abstraction: treating the poem as a transparent form, a rhythmic (outer) nexus of typical (inner) images" that music "distills into an attitude, mirrors it at a distance."³⁹⁸ Kramer goes on

³⁹⁵ Manfred Grabs, "Wir, so gut es gelang, haben das Unsre getan," in *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft* XV/1-2: Berlin, 1973, 50.

³⁹⁶ Schumann's 1853 Violin Concerto, commissioned by his friend the violinist Joseph Joachim only months before the composer's suicide attempt, was unearthed despite a family ban on its performance and premiered in 1937 as a Nazi-sanctioned celebration of "Germanness." Nina Totenberg, "A Violin Concerto Back from Beyond the Grave," National Public Radio Music News, audio broadcast, 30 October 2014.

³⁹⁷ Eisler, *Gespräche mit Hans Bunge*, 150.

³⁹⁸ Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 144.

to note that Lieder criticism has tended to subscribe to this same weightlessness, isolating the art form *as* art music and detaching it from its social roots,³⁹⁹ in an early nineteenth-century cultural shift marked by the addition of the pianoforte into many bourgeois German and Austrian homes. In his 1938 essay with Bloch, “Die Kunst zu Erben,” Eisler mentions this shift in material production as evidence for musical development as historical process: “Das Hammerklavier ermöglichte eine andere Art von Musik als das Cembalo, die Wagnerische Instrumentation ist ohne das Ventilhorn undenkbar”⁴⁰⁰ [“The pianoforte made possible music different from that made on the harpsichord, Wagnerian instrumentation is unthinkable without the valve horn”]. Schubert and his friends and collaborators often tested new songs in informal house-concerts in Vienna; by the time Schumann wrote over forty Lieder in his 1840 “year of song,” the Liederabend tradition was well established among a growing middle class, in the era of Biedermeier culture-comforts. With its intimate instrumentation – pianoforte and solo voice – the genre lends itself to small spaces and attention to text. Often a German Lied can convey an entire narrative drama in a few pages, as in Schubert’s galloping “Erlkönig” or the third version of “Mignons Lied,” which takes singer and listeners on an internal three-stage journey from homesickness to physical turmoil and finally to a more vulnerable return to the initial theme. Finally – and this may have been something Eisler found lacking in twentieth-century Lieder interpretation – Romantic irony figures heavily in the genre, particularly in Schumann’s Heine settings, with their own friction between text and music and their parodic treatment of folksong-banality.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Eisler and Bloch, in Schmitt, 260.

Song cycles, from Schubert's *Schöne Müllerin* and late *Winterreise* to Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and *Liederkreis*, allowed the Lied form to expand like a crown of sonnets, linking one song to the next, often through harmonic relationships and thematic echoes. Schumann's *Dichterliebe* in particular exploits the "Romantic fragment," as the opening song ends on an unresolved dominant seventh chord. Though Charles Rosen has followed Friedrich Schlegel's idea of the self-contained fragment in his *Dichterliebe* analysis, relating fragment to aphorism and calling it "imperfect yet complete," a "finished form" with "content that is incomplete,"⁴⁰¹ Beate Perrey's 2002 study allows for more open-endedness in the Schumannian fragment:

The fragment system, or ensemble, thus differs from say a puzzle or a mosaic in that its parts and pieces do not complement one another or neatly fit together, and, most important of all, in that the last stone to complete the picture is always missing.⁴⁰²

Perrey distinguishes between Hegel's "positive" dialectics progressing toward wholeness and the "negative" dialectics of the early Romantics, favoring Novalis' sense of contradiction in pluralism, at work in Schumann's song cycle.⁴⁰³ Eisler himself found the aphoristic, fragmentary quality of Schumann's music to be "unfinished" and "suggestive" rather than self-contained.⁴⁰⁴ The collisions between voice and piano are striking in the *Dichterliebe*, particularly in the song "Ich grolle nicht" ["I don't complain"], in which the piano pounds out furious chords while the singer insists – until a final, vengeful explosion – that he or she is above complaining about having been jilted. Carsten Schmidt has gone so far as to call the piano the "subconscious" of the

⁴⁰¹ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 49-50.

⁴⁰² Beate Julia Perrey, *Schumann's Dichterliebe and Early Romantic Poetics: The Fragmentation of Desire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 29.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Eisler and Adorno, 25.

singer's voice, subverting the text throughout the cycle.⁴⁰⁵ Certainly Schumann's preludes and postludes act as voices in their own right; in the cycle's twelfth song, "Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen" ["On the bright summer morning"], the silent poet listens to flowers speaking to him, as text gives way to a delicate melody rising out of the piano's broken chords in the postlude. Drawing on the multiplicity of subject-positions in the Heine poems he set, as well as on the poet's famous "Stimmungsbruch" or tone-break, Schumann further destabilizes the lyric "I" by voicing it in two physically separate instruments. In Eisler's Schumannian settings of Hölderlin, however, the dialectics of unresolved conflict, very much at work in his earlier Heine settings, yield to a more Hegelian "Aufhebung" or subsuming of contradictory elements.⁴⁰⁶ What results is not a sense of progress, however, but an eerie suggestion of the Lieder tradition, within the larger, polyphonic sound-world of the cycle.

How Eisler's songs affected their hearers in 1940s Hollywood can only be guessed, aside from Brecht's and Adorno's praise of their "de-plastering" of Hölderlin and their compositional sophistication. As Stephen Hinton has noted, it is a common mistake to assume that Eisler's often very specific goals for performers' and listeners' critical participation in his music "were actually realized in reception."⁴⁰⁷ That said, this novel re-voicing of the German Lied tradition offers rich interpretive possibilities for male or female singers. Unlike Eisler's other settings of nineteenth-century poetry, from the early Heine choruses to the 1950s Goethe settings for female voice, and finally to his late Hölderlin songs for baritone, this cycle does not specify voice type.

⁴⁰⁵ Carsten Schmidt, Words and Music Seminar lecture, Sarah Lawrence College, April 1999.

⁴⁰⁶ For a similar application of Hegelian dialectics to Eisler's music, a common practice among East German musicologists, see Károly Csipák, *Probleme der Volkstümlichkeit bei Hanns Eisler* (Munich: Musikverlag Emil Katzwichler, 1975), 243.

⁴⁰⁷ Stephen Hinton, "Hanns Eisler and the Ideology of Modern Music," in *New Music and Ideology*, ed. M. Delaere (Wilhelmshaven, 1996), 84.

The cycle's middle-to-high range could easily be sung by a soprano, tenor, mezzo, or baritone. This vocal ambiguity is also gender ambiguity, allowing for change and difference in every performance. This is not voice as "a medium of self-presence," as Derrida would suggest, or as "a drive-invested object," an idea developed by Lacan and his followers, or even the "overflow[ing]," but still "self-re-marking," operatic voice Lawrence Kramer notes is "supposed to give us shivers."⁴⁰⁸ The voice of Eisler's Hölderlin is more like an open, dis-articulating circuit. It not only can be a soprano or baritone but also shares musical space with other voices: the piano, cited language of Heine, and musical allusions to Schubert, Schumann, Bach, Schoenberg, and jazz. Sometimes the voice breaks or falls off, and the instrumental voice "speaks" in its place. Eisler thus orchestrates Hölderlin's lyric "I" as a fragile, gender-ambiguous, plural presence. Following Mikhail Bakhtin's distinction between single-voiced lyric poetry and polyphonic novel (though he points out that not all novels are as pluralistic as Dostoevsky's⁴⁰⁹), Eisler's music becomes "novelistic poetry: estranged, heteroglot, distanced, with an orchestrated non-voice instead of a 'true,' personal voice."⁴¹⁰ With the ever-changing movement and acceleration noted in the score, this voice is also in a state of continual flight.

Eisler's *Hölderlin-Fragmente* opens, uncharacteristically for German Lieder, especially for the first song in a cycle, with no tone- or scene-setting prelude. The abrupt opening of "An die Hoffnung," in addition to the fact that the lower portions of the draft score's pages are

⁴⁰⁸ See Lawrence Kramer, "The Voice of/in Opera," in Walter Bernhart and Lawrence Kramer, eds., *On Voice*, Word and Music Studies 13 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014), 50, 54.

⁴⁰⁹ See M.M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), Kindle Edition, locations 2898-3037.

⁴¹⁰ Jørgen Bruhn, note on this text in manuscript form, 19 January 2014.

literally torn off,⁴¹¹ heightens the sense of fragmentation and fragility. Though Eisler initially sketched an introduction to the unaccompanied vocal entrance,⁴¹² he removed this as the fragmentary nature of the cycle developed. “An die Hoffnung” begins with a completely exposed downward leap of almost an octave:

Fig. 2.1



This hasty, “zart drängend” [“gently urgent”] entrance prefigures much of the vocal writing to come, with more than twice as many editorial indications of quick movement or acceleration than “ruhig” [“quiet”] or slowing signals.⁴¹³ This syllabic, hasty voice recalls what Roland Barthes calls “the body that beats,” always on the verge of its own dis-articulation in Schumann’s music.⁴¹⁴ The singer’s opening motif is repeated in the piano throughout the first

⁴¹¹ Hanns Eisler, “An die Hoffnung,” autograph draft 1939, Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste Berlin, Hanns-Eisler-Archiv, Sign. 328. “An die Hoffnung” was originally sketched for Eisler’s collaboration with Brecht on his *Goliath* project, an operatic parable of power and its costs. See Joy Calico, *Brecht at the Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 95-96.

⁴¹² Eisler, “An die Hoffnung,” autograph draft.

⁴¹³ Eisler’s most common tempo indications in the song cycle are “drängend” or “accelerando”; other notes include “bewegte” [“agitated”], “fließende” [“flowing”], and “beschwingt” [“swung”]. The cycle includes seventeen such notes, with only seven “ritard” or “ruhig” indications. See Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 59-75.

⁴¹⁴ Roland Barthes, “Rasch,” in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 299.

page, as if breaking one body into several, in varying registers and usually dropping the distance of a minor seventh. The motif echoes Eisler's use of the B-A-C-H theme in his *Fünf Elegien* ["*Five Elegies*"] of the same period.⁴¹⁵ Used by Bach himself and later by nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers as a musical cryptogram, the motif normally consists of a B-flat, A, C, and B-natural, noted as H in the German musical "alphabet." Eisler's decision to leave out the A – until it appears in the singer's next bar, after an eighth rest – shows his tendency to estrange the tradition on which he drew. Schumann had developed a series of keyboard fugues based on the motif in 1845, creating a descending melodic pattern out of the normally more static ordering of the notes; Schoenberg and his student Anton Webern, also a major influence on Eisler, had also exploited the motif in their respective *Variations for Orchestra* (1926-28) and *String Quartet* (1937-38). Even more tellingly, and also indicative of the political-formalist tensions ever at work in his life, Eisler saw an explicit link between the B-A-C-H pattern and the workers' movement. In an introductory note to his own 1934 "Präludium und Fuge über B-A-C-H" for string trio, Eisler had emphasized the pattern in its literally alphabetic sense, in order to bring a twelve-tone work closer to working-class listeners:

Die Wahl des Mottos 'B-A-C-H' bedeutet keine Ehrung Johann Sebastian Bachs, der es nicht notwendig hat, in dieser Weise geehrt zu werden. Die Wahl des Mottos soll vielmehr an die spießbürgerliche Mystik des Durchschnittsmusikers anknüpfen, der oft von Bach nur die Buchstaben B-A-C-H versteht.⁴¹⁶

[The choice of the 'B-A-C-H' motto is not meant to honor to Johann Sebastian Bach, who doesn't need to be honored in this way. The choice of the motto should connect much more to the bourgeois mysticism of the common musicians, who often only understand no more of Bach than the letters B-A-C-H.]

⁴¹⁵ Workman, 47.

⁴¹⁶ Hanns Eisler, Einleitung (Entwurf), "Präludium und Fuge über B-A-C-H (mit 12 Tönen), in Hanns Eisler, *Schriften I: Musik und Politik 1924-1948* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1973), 378. Contemporary composer and Eisler scholar Luca Lombardi has also drawn on both Schumann and the B-A-C-H motif in his politically pointed string quartet "*Warum?*"

Setting a call toward hope, however impossible, to this motif ties Eisler’s exile songs back to his 1920s workers’ music. This musical cipher also “acts as a mediator between the [broadly] classical heritage and the avant-garde,”⁴¹⁷ as it layers multiple, implied voices in the score.

“An die Hoffnung” is unmetred, though it leans toward 4/4 time in its quarter-note allocations; its character is marked from the outset with a possible contradiction: “Zart drängende” and “*etwas hastig*” [“Gently pressing” and “somewhat hastily”].⁴¹⁸ The next three bars ask the singer to enter an eighth rest after the piano, in speech-like eighth-note lines that rush into triplets at the end of each bar, enacting Hölderlin’s asymmetrical Alcaic meter in musical terms. These breathless, syncopated entrances over sustained, pianissimo lines in the piano press toward an even quieter, anxiously accelerated repetition of the question “Wo bist Du?” **Fig. 2.2**

Despite abrupt changes in tonality, texture, and mood throughout the cycle, this rushed vocal movement is quite consistent until the last song. Instead of a reliable lyric “I” reflecting on the world from a clear standpoint, this voice is continually in flight, adding to its elusive, ghostly quality. At the melodic level, Eisler follows a roughly serialist nonredundancy model, in which – in its strict Schoenbergian form – a note cannot be repeated until all of the other notes in the

⁴¹⁷ Workman, 48.

⁴¹⁸ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 59.

twelve-tone row have sounded. As is usually the case in Eisler's serialist-influenced songs, he breaks this rule occasionally to echo traditional song forms, particularly in his use of refrain, but overall shows an effort to "move through the total chromatic in the shortest possible space."⁴¹⁹ In this song, the first page carries a recognizably twelve-tone quality, as the singer's melody twists and turns on minor seconds and sevenths. At the same time, the lines' vertical movement is as predictable as its rhythmic buildup, with a falling-rising-falling sequence repeated three times before the identical "Wo bist du?" phrases. These three bars form the song's true caesura; the piano's shift into flowing triplet arpeggios signals entrance into a disorienting liminal space. As in Hölderlin's idea of the "tragic transport," the metric acceleration of the preceding lines brings the solo voice to a brink, calling to Hope among sorrowing mortals. Though Claudia Albert interprets hope in this phrase not as a "Rettungsanker für ein verzweifertes Subjekt, sondern bedeutet Bewegung auf ein Ziel hin"⁴²⁰ ["saving anchor for a despairing subject, but rather it means movement toward a goal"], the orchestrated "non-voice" of Eisler's Hölderlin hardly sounds resolute in moving forward. The almost-whispered, hasty, staccato "Wo bist du?" might as well be asking "Wo bin ich?" ["Where am I?"].

After its caesura, the song enters new territory in the second page. Now marked "ruhig" ["peaceful"], the music follows more predictably tonal melodic patterns, outlining frequent minor thirds over steady piano chords – though Eisler does give the instrument an unpedaled, heavy forte-piano accent on the first downbeat of this section. Eisler also introduces two melodic fragments that will reappear throughout the cycle, both scored here in the treble clef, though they can also be taken down an octave for the male voice:

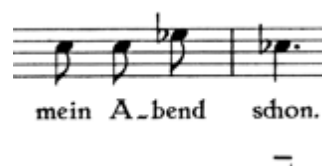
⁴¹⁹ Heister, in Blake, 219.

⁴²⁰ Claudia Albert, *Das schwierige Handwerk des Hoffens: Hanns Eislers "Hollywooder Liederbuch"* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991), 111.

Fig. 2.3 (treble clef)



Fig. 2.4 (treble clef)



Musical irony echoing Schumann’s Heine settings – and more characteristic of Schumann than Eisler, who with Brecht usually favored obvious forms of distancing over ironic layering⁴²¹ – wins the day in the song’s final lines, in which the singer rises to a high, loud F marked “pesante” [“heavy”] on the words “Und schon gesanglos” [“And already songless”]. The voice then plunges downward in a triplet-driven “schlummert das schauernde Herz” [“the shuddering heart sleeps”], fleeing once again from its own sound-world. The piano follows with one of several pressing and (depending on performance) even thundering postludes in the cycle, recalling Schumann’s song “Und wüßten’s die Blumen, die kleinen” in the *Dichterliebe*.⁴²²

Fig. 2.5

⁴²¹ Thanks to Andreas Aurin for this reminder, Berlin, 20 November 2014.

⁴²² Robert Schumann, *Dichterliebe* (Leipzig: Edition Peters), 15.

Marked “*drängend und leidenschaftlich*”⁴²³ [“*pressing and passionate*”], Eisler’s postlude combines two-against-three meter with a final, insistent descending pattern in the right hand echoing the “O Hoffnung” line that opens the song. The piano “shudders” through the chromatic register, landing on a loud and heavily accented chord cluster based on B minor. That both the Schumann and the Eisler postludes follow the word “Herz” (and a torn or shuddering heart at that) is not surprising. **Fig. 2.6**



Applying dialectical analysis to the song, it is difficult to parse colliding musical elements, as in Eisler’s 1925 Heine choruses. Here a more Hegelian form of synthesis occurs, in which contrasting materials yield in a process of “*Aufhebung*” both dissolution and transformation. Twelve-tone elements slip into a Baroque musical cipher; chromatic twists give way to minor thirds and a “*rasch*” [“*swift*,” “*hurried*”] Schumannian postlude, an extension *and* disintegration of the singer’s “*body that beats.*”⁴²⁴ This song’s overriding “*Stimmung*” is hardly the cool, measured character usually noted in Eisler’s *Hollywooder Liederbuch*. Rather, broken text and spiky serialism give way to a larger whole, a three-part Lied that traces a journey from

⁴²³ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 60.

⁴²⁴ Barthes and Roland, “*Rasch*,” in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 299.

anxious speech to vulnerable questioning, and finally to lyrical reflection in which the piano merges with the voice's final descending line and crashes to a state of furious despair, voicing what the singer no longer can. If Eisler wrote these songs "für die Schublade"⁴²⁵ ["for the drawer"], with the sense that he had lost his public, and perhaps some concern over his own formalist leanings, his speaker/singer has every reason to repeat "Wo bist du?" in the musical caesura. Paradoxically, Eisler's formal innovation aids the very political intention it sometimes appears to contradict. Here the poetic "non-voice" voices dissent in its very helplessness, reclaiming the German song tradition as a shadow ("den Schatten gleich"⁴²⁶) of itself.

After the crashing postlude that ends "An die Hoffnung," the singer begins "Andenken" with no prelude and another brief, unaccompanied utterance echoing the "mein Abend schon" melody-fragment (see **Fig. 2.4**) in the previous song: "Der Nordost weht"⁴²⁷ "Andenken" oscillates between 2/4 and 3/4 time in its recitative- or speech-like, twelve-tone-inflected opening, which again covers the entire twelve-span in only a few bars.⁴²⁸ The following piano passage shifts, wind-like, between 3/4 and 4/4 time as it rushes three octaves down the keyboard in thirds, another signal of "rasch" disarticulation. Even this moment is subsumed into lyricism, however; the song takes on a waltz-like quality in the next section, in which the singer recalls the gardens of Bordeaux with the first melodic fragment introduced in "An die Hoffnung" [see **Fig. 2.3**]. The piano's pedaled arpeggios are marked "*etwas drängend, aber sehr diskret!*"⁴²⁹

⁴²⁵ Betz, "Eisler und Hölderlin in Hollywood," in Mayer, 78.

⁴²⁶ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 60.

⁴²⁷ Ibid. 61.

⁴²⁸ Workman, 51.

⁴²⁹ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 61.

[“*somewhat pressing, but very discreet!*”], a moment of musical “tact” that distances these frankly lyrical lines from the lush song-atmosphere they recall.

Fig. 2.7

The musical score for Fig. 2.7 consists of two staves. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef, 3/4 time, with lyrics: "Geh a - ber nun, (etwas drängend, aber sehr diskret)". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment in bass clef, 3/4 time, featuring a triplet of eighth notes and a "Pedal" marking. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

As usual, Eisler does not allow the music to remain too long in an affective mode that might induce a trance state. In the very next passage, the singer punctuates the line “wo am scharfen Ufer hingehet der Steg”⁴³⁰ [“where on the steep bank the path descends”] with loud, speech-like eighth notes, recalling Eisler’s *Kampflieder* and percussive film scoring. Soon the music lapses into another waltz pattern, however; the piano attempts to maintain the distancing effect by picking up the singer’s percussive eighth-note pattern, moving gradually down the scale in a half-arrested “step of sorrow” passacaglia that mirrors Hölderlin’s pessimistic language.

Fig. 2.8

The musical score for Fig. 2.8 consists of two staves. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef, 6/8 time, with lyrics: "pap - peln. An Fei - er - ta - gen". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment in bass clef, 6/8 time, featuring a triplet of eighth notes and a "p" marking. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

⁴³⁰ Ibid. 62.

The song eventually yields to a 6/8 passage marked explicitly “viel ruhiger, wiegende”⁴³¹ [“much softer, rocking”]. Here the singer’s words suggest the very dream-state Eisler’s music has been attempting to hold off: women moving across silky ground, day and night blurring into each other, slow paths heavy with golden dreams. The north wind has now become a gentle breeze. Eisler’s piano writing in this section makes repeated “tonal allusions” between tonic and dominant in the bass line, and between thirds and sevenths in the right hand; Hanns-Werner Heister argues that these references are also “illusions, since they are not pursued to a cadential conclusion.”⁴³² **Fig. 2.9**



This rocking passage dies away with a ritard and triple-pianissimo interrupted, only briefly this time, with an “a tempo” marking on the last words “Lüfte ziehn”⁴³³ [“breezes waft”]. The piano completes the song with another Schumannian postlude, yielding completely to the rocking motion established a page earlier. Eisler’s percussive distancing has been subsumed into the very narcosis his music generally works against. That said, the song’s earlier resistance to this trance state, in its twelve-tone intervallic movement and its percussive interruptions, has not been forgotten. Accents over the piano’s final melody recall this earlier detachment, which has pulled insistently enough in the opposite direction from the song’s lyric tendency to leave its

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Heister, in Blake, 231.

⁴³³ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 63.

gentleness sounding suspended and provisional. In addition, the tonal “illusions” noted above create a suggestive “Stimmung,” not a merely imitative simulacrum, of the Lieder experience. If memory saturates Hölderlin’s poem, it works in Eisler’s adaptation as an even more typically Hölderlinian experience of temporal disorientation; the remembered “gardens,” associated with French free-thinking and foreignness for Hölderlin, exist for Eisler in the southern-California present. This “Andenken” alienates its setting by treating it as *already* remembered. That Eisler’s draft score shows as much violent scratching-out as it does musical notation⁴³⁴ indicates the composer’s difficult process of finding an expressive mode that could achieve this distancing within the Lied form.

The cycle’s third song, “Elegie 1943,” is the first to begin with a piano prelude. Set in a steady 2/4 time and marked “Mäßige, nicht schleppen” [“Measured, without dragging”], as well as “zögernd” [“hesitant”], the piano’s dactylic opening, set at two different rhythmic speeds and recalling chromatic patterns in the first two songs, is quickly taken up by the voice. This dance- or folksong-like meter works against the song’s grim, fragmented text about the angry waters’ return, very much the way dactylic dance-meters function in the word-fracturing poetry of Paul Celan.⁴³⁵ Eisler’s music works against this metric lilt as well; Schumannian irony is slowly accumulating along with the music’s suggestion of nineteenth-century “schöne Klang”⁴³⁶ [“beautiful sound”], so that the music’s own inherited form estranges it. On the song’s first page

⁴³⁴ Hanns Eisler, “Andenken,” autograph draft, Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste Berlin, Hanns-Eisler-Archiv, Sign. 319.

⁴³⁵ See Axel Englund, *Still Songs: Music In and Around the Poetry of Paul Celan* (Farnham, Surrey, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), 59. Englund has noted that while “metric structures inherited from Romanticism” are essential to Celan’s poetic repertoire, “the problematic status of ‘songful’ verse in German after the Holocaust is thematized by Celan in several early poems” and beyond. *Ibid.* 83, 85.

⁴³⁶ Eisler and Bloch, “Die Kunst zu Erben,” in Schmitt, 260.

Eisler embeds yet another “step of sorrow” bass line in the piano, a pattern that backtracks and begins again, five times. **Fig. 2.10**

Meanwhile, the vocal line begins to break up on the line “so gärt´und wuchs und wogte von Jahr zu Jahr”⁴³⁷ [“so seethed and grew and rocked from year to year”], with eighth rests before each “und,” syncopating an already glottal-stopped utterance. By the time the voice completes the phrase on “die unerhörte Schlacht” [“the unheard battle”], it is crying out *to* be heard, on accented E-flats and an F,⁴³⁸ a likely point of register-change for many voices, echoing the vulnerability demanded of the male voice in Eisler’s Heine settings. The singer then moves into a Schubertian line that even includes a grace note and slips into a 3/4 bar, yet another moment of subtle parodic irony, though not outright satire.

Further rhythmic destabilization occurs in the next section, which the voice opens with “Wer brachte den Fluch?” [“Who brought the curse?”], slipping again into 3/4 time on “nicht und nicht von gestern” [“not and not from yesterday”], in a melodic line, doubled in the piano, that evokes Baroque appoggiatura, or “leaning” notes. The piano then shifts to a “funereal treading rhythm”⁴³⁹ leading to the reference to mortals’ self-destructive trampling, a line marked,

⁴³⁷ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 63.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ Workman, 56.

oddly, with another grace note. The piano pulls the voice down along another descending passacaglia, this time weighted in left-hand octaves, until it reaches “dem Chaos gleich” [“like chaos”] on a ritard and pianissimo, before re-enacting the “step of sorrow” on the song’s final line about life as “wild ... und verzagt und kalt von Sorgen”⁴⁴⁰ [“wild ... and rueful and cold with care”]. This line is marked again by grace notes, which add to the cumulative discomfort of ironic lilt and ornament, amid the text’s grimness and the bass line’s inexorable descent.

Fig. 2.11

45
 schlecht die Wün - sche nach, und wild ist und ver - zagt und kalt von Sor - gen das

This elegy’s pessimistic undertow does not stop with the voice; the piano keeps spinning out its chromatic dactyls in an obsessive Schumannian postlude. The ever-returning passacaglia, still in left-hand octaves, is halted briefly with a ritard, breath mark, and fermata before ending on a distinctly unresolved chord that appears to settle on F minor but is too harmonically de-centered to be easily recognized.

Fig. 2.12

60

⁴⁴⁰ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 66.

From a poem originally titled “Der Frieden,” Eisler’s elegy becomes an invocation of the very Nemesis his radical adaptation cuts. This figure of enmity, the elusive presence behind the “curse,” burdens humankind with violence and sorrow, but without the grander context of Hölderlin’s Greek gods (however elusive themselves) and without his vision of returning peace. That this grim fragment takes on a lyric quality bordering on graceful is a nod to the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, similar to the troubling lyrics set to catchy tunes in the Brecht-Eisler ballads of the Nazi era. In this case, Eisler’s obsessively recycled downward passacaglia works in a more introspective mode than it does in his Heine choruses and secular cantatas; here this trope does not enact collective lament but rather plays like a feedback loop, a dark thought pattern the speaker/singer cannot escape in his or her own head. This private, inexorable voicing of mourning in the piano ultimately weights the song’s melodic flow until it disintegrates in the final bars, as if overcome by the “alten Wasser”⁴⁴¹ [“old waters”] returning in their terrible rage. Eisler has composed a virtual battleground, abstracted into the very cultural material appropriated for German nationalist self-justification.

Eisler’s setting of “Die Heimat” shows yet another conflicted compositional process, with deep cuts, scratch marks, and revisions in the draft score, particularly in the song’s final vocal line and postlude, with slurs cut from the left-hand keyboard writing,⁴⁴² perhaps reflecting Eisler’s concern with how much lyricism to allow. The song begins as the two opening fragments do, with a sudden and briefly unaccompanied vocal entrance. A fugue-like, staggered line of descending thirds in voice and piano seems to pull the sailor downward toward home along the river; this line explicitly echoes the opening of Brahms’ piano *Intermezzo* 119 no. 1,

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Hanns Eisler, “Die Heimat,” autograph draft, Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste Berlin, Hanns-Eisler-Archiv, Sign. 411.

“with its almost Schoenberg-like meanderings.”⁴⁴³ This melodic movement, marked “[l]eicht bewegt” and “beschwingt, nicht schleppen” [“lightly moved” and “bouyant, not dragging”], halts in the third line, which echoes the syncopated chord pattern in “Elegie 1943,” as the singer asks/states “Ach was hab’ ich, wie Leid, geerntet”⁴⁴⁴ [“Ah, what have I gathered but sorrow”] and repeats the phrase with a grace note, also echoing the previous song’s gentle lilt.

Fig. 2.13

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major and features a melodic sequence starting with a grace note. The piano accompaniment features a fluttering triple-pianissimo pattern in the left hand and chords in the right hand. Dynamics include p, p, sf, mf, and sf.

A slowing, heavily accented line in the piano works as a caesura at this point; the breaks in this fragment heighten its internal montage character “like cuts in a film.”⁴⁴⁵ After this caesura, the keyboard begins a fluttering triple-pianissimo pattern under a sung melodic sequence that plays on the minor sixth. This interval carries associations with pleading or lamenting lines in Bach (as noted in the previous chapter, the opening of the aria “Erbarme dich” in the *St. Matthew Passion* and “Ich habe genug” in Cantata no. 82) and with similar expressive moments in Verdi’s operas, among many other examples. Eisler’s use of this interval to underpin the singer’s longing for a childhood landscape gives the song a conventionally lyric quality, which, as in the previous song, disintegrates several times with rests as a form of caesura.

⁴⁴³ Workman, 58-59.

⁴⁴⁴ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 67-68.

⁴⁴⁵ Heister, in Blake, 238.

Most striking in the “Heimat” fragment is its postlude, a condensed Schumannian plunge in descending thirds that sound deceptively dissonant, since the first note of the descent sharps the C-natural established at the beginning of the bar.

Fig. 2.14



This passage is marked with another Schumannian “*rasch*”⁴⁴⁶ and a diminuendo; it dies away down the keyboard over a crashing E-flat seventh chord in the left hand. To this point in the cycle, Eisler’s Hölderlin fragments have grown more and more lyrical, in a cumulative overcoming that enacts Hegelian dialectics. By this point performers and listeners alike may have started to come under the spell of the music’s “*Stimmung*,” which carries significant lyric charisma for all its abstracted distancing. This postlude rears up – or more accurately, down – to disturb the musical flow. At the same time, its dissonance is partly deceptive. Both left-hand chord and right-hand descent are made up of thirds, as in the song’s opening; their dissonance arises once again from sounding out of harmonic context.⁴⁴⁷ Fritz Hennenberg argues that this harmonic dislocation alienates the entire poem for the listener;⁴⁴⁸ it seems more likely that even this dissonance sounds within the “*Stimmung*” of nineteenth-century aesthetics, especially

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid. 68.

⁴⁴⁷ See Fritz Hennenberg, “Zur Dialektik des Schließens in Liedern von Hanns Eisler,” in *Sammelbände zur Musikgeschichte der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, vol. II (Berlin, 1971), 201.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

considering the brink-of-dissonance Brahms allusion that opens the song, and Schumann's own tendency toward unsettling postludes. Once again, Eisler's Hölderlin fragments cannot entirely escape the Liederabend-world they evoke from a distance. Even dissonance within the Romantic musical tradition carries associations with beauty, which tends to take on a life – however ghostly – of its own in Eisler's 1940s songs.

The fifth Hölderlin fragment, “An eine Stadt” (originally titled “Heidelberg”), is the piece Eisler dedicated to Schubert. Its first autograph sketch mirrors the song cycle's “negative lyric” aspect in a material way, in addition to its now-anonymous city that heightens the cycle's spatial ambiguity. Eisler crossed out the first two lines completely; the draft breaks off at “ländlichschönste, so viel ich” [“loveliest (city) in the land, how much I”], leaving a white-space caesura below the musical notation. Despite this compositional interruption, Eisler's final version of the song links it to the cycle's larger sound-world, though this song itself is marked by breaks as much as by Lied-like flow. “An eine Stadt” opens in a B-flat major seventh tone-field, calling up a phantom tonic, the key of F, heard in the previous song.⁴⁴⁹ With no prelude, once again, the song takes on folksong-like triple meter marked by gentle triadic chords in the piano. Eisler gives the vocal line an additional lilt, with triples in almost every bar, and embeds traces of his lament-passacaglia in the chords' inner voices. This richly chorded, waltz-like melody is one of the most memorably lyrical in the cycle; of course Eisler does not let it last. The piano picks up the singer's line, extending and dis-articulating the lyric “I” once again. The melody develops the “doch atmet kalt” motif from “An die Hoffnung,”⁴⁵⁰ before breaking into a frenetic staccato oscillation between 1/4 and 2/4 time.

⁴⁴⁹ Workman, 63.

⁴⁵⁰ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 60.

Fig. 2.15

The image shows a musical score for a piano and voice. The piano part is in the lower register, featuring a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand, marked *mf espress. 3*. The vocal part is in the upper register, featuring a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes. The score includes the lyrics "Nur etwas belebter" and "Wie der Vo-gel des". The score is marked with a tempo of *mf espress. 3* and a dynamic of *fp sempre stacc.* The score is numbered 15 and 20.

This interruption, on the “Wie der Vogel des Walds”⁴⁵¹ reference to the bird and the bridge, builds in a sextuplet-over-triplets pattern until the lilting A theme returns. A second irruption in the song occurs on the words “Du hast dem Flüchtigen kühlenden Schatten geschenkt”⁴⁵² [“You gave the wanderer/ Cool shade”], linking the bird’s flight to that of the wanderer or refugee. Once again, the voice flees, this time from a beautiful landscape evoked in songful charisma. Both of these interruptions create an agitated “Stimmung” similar to that in the middle section of Schubert’s third “Mignons Lied,”⁴⁵³ also a depiction of exile. In both songs, repeated chords in triple meter (Eisler in 9/8, Schubert in 6/8) beat an obsessive pattern more evocative of a racing heart than of rocking or dancing rhythm. Eisler’s percussive “agit” signature, echoing his city music in *Kuhle Wampe*, is also present here, though the vocal line’s continued lyricism (almost in spite of itself) threatens to overcome the keyboard writing marked “leicht” or “soft.”

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. 69-70.

⁴⁵² Ibid. 71.

⁴⁵³ Franz Schubert, “Lied der Mignon,” in *Franz Schuberts Werke XX* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel), 175.

Fig. 2.16a (Eisler), b (Schubert)

[a]

50
Du hast dem Flüch-ti-gen küh-len.den Schat-ten ge-schenkt und die Ge-

p (leicht)

[b]

a tempo
Es schwin-delt mir, es brennt mein Ein-ge-wei-do, es schwin-delt mir, es brennt mein Ein-ge-

cresc.
f
decrease.
p

Gradually Eisler's fragment reveals its underlying rondo structure: ABACA.⁴⁵⁴ Its second irruption (or C theme), on the lyrical line "Du hast dem Flüchtigen kühlen Schatten geschenkt"⁴⁵⁵ noted above, takes on a pattern of rising sixths and chromatic movement echoing the songs of Hugo Wolf.⁴⁵⁶ The A theme appears a third time to complete the song, with one more interruption, a whole rest in the bar between "duftenden Gärten" and "ruhn"⁴⁵⁷ ["fragrant

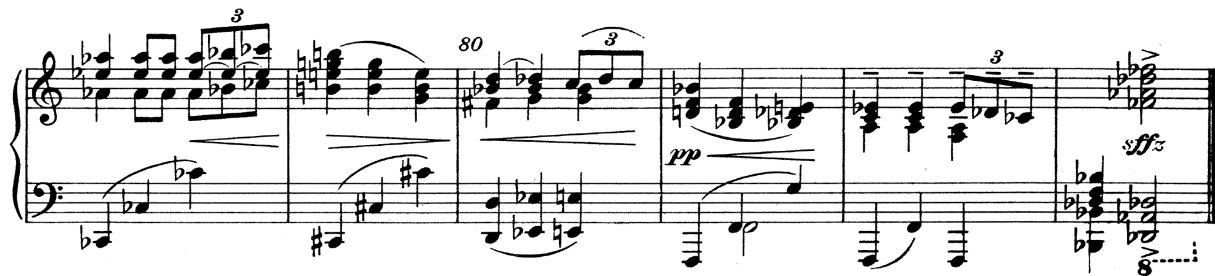
⁴⁵⁴ Heister, in Blake, 242.

⁴⁵⁵ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 71.

⁴⁵⁶ Workman, 66.

⁴⁵⁷ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 72.

gardens” and “rest”]. The piano picks up the singer’s line once again in the postlude, this time with the overtly Romantic addition of rolled chords in the right hand. A final, double-sforzando D-flat minor chord crashes down in the final bar, cutting off – with anything but “peace” – this lyrical song that, once again, has threatened to cast a spell. **Fig. 2.17**



Tension between rondo form and musical caesura (are the B and C themes really themes or interruptions?) keeps “An eine Stadt” in suspension between the sound-world of nineteenth-century Lieder and the disruptive aesthetic of agit-prop. The piano’s rising octaves that ground and propel the vocal A-theme refrain could easily carry performers and listeners along into a cozy dreamworld, imagining the poem’s images of home (whether Hölderlin’s Heidelberg or Eisler’s own birth city, Vienna, also associated with Schubert). These images float into another “negative” image, that of the upholstered parlor where the Liederabend usually took place – for Eisler himself, perhaps a particular room in his childhood home in Leipzig, where his father sang the Lieder of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf.⁴⁵⁸ Because this song does not end the cycle, even its final break between words and D-minor irruption work more as caesurae or cadential delay than as final statements. All of this said, the buildup of lyric charisma in this song seems to leak from its dialectical role and incite longing for more; the push-pull of attraction and resistance tugs inexorably toward “schöne Klang” as the cycle progresses.

⁴⁵⁸ Wißmann, 35.

Eisler's Hölderlin cycle ends with his conflicted "Erinnerung" ["Memory"], distanced even in its title from its much-appropriated source, "Gesang des Deutschen" – in the same B-flat tone-field that began and almost concluded "An eine Stadt." As noted earlier, the poem itself works from a bird's-eye distance and past-tense syntax as the speaker surveys his compromised homeland. Eisler was fully aware of the "schamlosen Nationalismus" ["shameless nationalism"] easily read into Hölderlin's poem; Brecht noted this with surprise, saying to Eisler in workaday dialect, "Mensch, biste national!"⁴⁵⁹ ["Man, you're nationalistic!"]. As Eisler later put it to Hanns Bunge, he saw the poem "zwar nicht sentimental, sondern durch die Brille Hölderlins gesehen, der ja ein früher Jakobiner war"⁴⁶⁰ ["certainly not as sentimental, but seen through the lens of Hölderlin, who was actually an early Jacobin"]. This last fragment begins once again with unaccompanied voice, hesitant after a sixteenth-rest and marked "Ruhig" ["peaceful"] as the singer utters "O heilig Herz der Völker, o Vaterland!"⁴⁶¹ ["O sacred heart of the people, o Fatherland!"], creating an alienated "Stimmung" from the outset; the poem's charged words are sung as if remembered in a lost state of innocence. Unlike the songs that have preceded it, "Erinnerung" tends toward quiet, unhurried movement, the voice's flight arrested in a moment of recollection. This opening line nods to the twelve-tone passage that begins "An die Hoffnung" but quickly yields to a more predictably tonal melody that plays on the major-minor quality of the F triad. Underneath this melody, the piano begins a quietly obsessive dotted-eighth note pattern that registers kinetically as a jerky rocking motion, fluctuating between major sixths, tritones, and major sevenths.

⁴⁵⁹ Bunge, 192.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 73.

Fig. 2.18

5
(nicht schleppen) All-dul - dend, gleich der schweigen - den Mut - - ter
(weich) 3

A surprising tonal shift occurs on the last syllable of “allverkannt”⁴⁶² [“all-misunderstood”], which moves from a C-minor to jazzy D-minor seventh tone-field. Eisler’s use of distinctly jazz harmonies is unusual but telling in the cycle, particularly in its final song; the composer injects reminders of Hollywood exile into his Lieder-suggestive music, a further act of distancing. After this harmonic shift, the singer breaks into a chattering “poco meno” (“a little less,” still understated), baldly tonal complaint about strangers gathering German spirit and thoughts, and plucking their grapes – what Eisler later related to the Russians “harvesting the vine” in his comment on his own tactlessness to Hans Bunge.⁴⁶³ Here a more Brechtian collision of unlike elements occurs than in the rest of the cycle: jerky dotted octaves in the piano undermine the singer’s almost cheerful-sounding utterance. Still, even this moment gives way to steadier sixteenth notes and then to an even gentler 6/8 pattern on the line “Doch magst du manches Schöne nicht bergen mir”⁴⁶⁴ [“Yet you do not like to hide some of your beauty from me”], echoing the “doch atmet kalt” motif.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Bunge, 195.

⁴⁶⁴ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 74.

Fig. 2.19

Doch magst du man - dies Schö - ne nicht ber - gen mir.

This passage is also evocative of Hugo Wolf’s song “Heb’ auf dein’ Blondes Haupt”⁴⁶⁵ [“Lift up your blonde head”]; the association of beauty with bloneness under Nazism gives this line a discomfiting twist.

The final section of the song takes up Hölderlin’s distant view of German mountains, riverbanks, and industrious workers and thinkers. Oscillating quietly between 6/8 and 9/8 time, the piano’s rocking motion and the voice’s sway between speech rhythm and melisma create a lulling effect. In addition, this pattern rhythmically echoes the lilting vocal lines in “An eine Stadt.” Eisler’s signature “lamento” passacaglia attempts to move in reverse, with chromatically ascending eighth notes in the bass that falter downward and hover on C and D-flat. No crashing chords break in to disturb the utopian trance. In fact, the final cadence of the vocal line, repeated in the piano after a gently predictable postlude, is a shift from an F-minor melodic phrase on “Ernste” [“earnestness”] to quick eighth notes on “leuchtet” [“lights”], a surprise C-to-A half-landing on the F major triad. Harmonically, the music shifts from a dominant seventh (C7) chord with a suspended minor sixth to a bright F major. The resulting sonority is just enough out of place to register discomfort. The same harmonic shift has already occurred once in the song, more fleetingly, in the “und sah dich/ Und an den Ufern” line in which the speaker/singer recalls

⁴⁶⁵ Workman, 69.

looking at his homeland from a distance.⁴⁶⁶ More a jazz convention than a Lieder trope, this chord progression, and the downward third that completes the melody, is the same change that ends Harold Arlen’s 1933 song “Stormy Weather,” while Eisler’s remains suspended on the third in the major triad.

Fig. 2.20



Most critics read this song as Eisler’s earnest effort to “deliver a message” to his shattered homeland, especially in the “shin[ing]” and “fulfilling” final notes of “Erinnerung,”⁴⁶⁷ which Claudia Albert sees as open in the sense of giving art and science the task of speaking for the “other” Germany in the future.⁴⁶⁸ Eisler’s musical reading of Hölderlin actually denies an easily hopeful conclusion. First, he gives the Liederabend “Stimmung” a final moment of estrangement, with a jazz chord change very much in the air during his time in Hollywood, whether or not Eisler intended a direct citation.⁴⁶⁹ Singers from Ethel Waters to Lena Horne had already made “Stormy Weather” famous, and the film that bore its title appeared in 1943, placing the song very much in the air during Eisler’s Hölderlin compositions. By locating the final

⁴⁶⁶ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 75.

⁴⁶⁷ See Heister, in Blake, 245.

⁴⁶⁸ Albert, 156-157.

⁴⁶⁹ Simone Hohmaier has noted Eisler’s favoring of suggestive over literal citation of musical material in his “Versatzstücke” or “set pieces.” Conversation, Berlin, 2 December 2014.

moment of this German-Lieder-inflected song cycle in the sound-world of Hollywood and jazz, Eisler adds a final touch of discomfort and distance to his “negative Lyrik” project. In addition, the jilted-lover subject voicing “Stormy Weather” may have held some resonance for a composer writing music for the homeland that had betrayed him and so many others; in this sense the fragment-cycle also recalls Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* settings of Heine, with his own betrayed-lover response to “Germanness.” Finally, the song’s ending on two quick eighth notes, first in the voice and then in the piano after the song’s dreamlike postlude, gives it a tossed-off quality that would sound banal without its strange and skillful harmonic underpinning. This light, abrupt conclusion is especially striking in a line about “serious” or “weighty” thought. Recalling Eisler’s “sarcastic jazz-band accompaniments” that elicited Soviet criticism in the 1930s,⁴⁷⁰ this cultural trope is now too hot to touch; the music briefly flees into the world of jazz and silver screen, and then is gone. The cycle ends not on Hölderlin’s last word but on a caesura.

As East German musicologist Fritz Hennenberg noted in his 1971 Eisler study, the “Halbschluß“ [half cadence], or cadence suspended on the dominant, is important to Eisler’s work – notably in the “Solidaritätslied,” which ends not only on the fifth of the scale but with an open question in Brecht’s text (“Wessen Morgen ist der Morgen, wessen Welt ist die Welt?” [“Whose morning is the morning, whose world is the world?”] – and can be thought of in a wider sense as well.⁴⁷¹ In songs such as “Erinnerung,” what Hennenberg calls “die Tektonik des Schlusses” [“the tectonics of the cadence”] works not as a climax or suspension but rather as a

⁴⁷⁰ Yana Alexandrovna Lowry, *From Massenlieder to Massovaia Pesnia: Musical Exchanges between Communists and Socialists of Weimar Germany and the Early Soviet Union*, Doctoral Dissertation, Duke University Department of Music, 2014, 270.

⁴⁷¹ Hennenberg, 181-194.

third kind of ending, in which “[d]er Gesang bricht quasi mitten in der Entwicklung ab”⁴⁷² [“the song breaks off almost in the middle of its development”]. This end-form is essential to Eisler’s dialectical music, which asks the listener to complete the sonic-textual thought:

Das Schlußwort erfordert von alters der Hervorhebung, soll es doch lange und eindringlich im Ohr haften ... Gerade die Vokalmusik vermag aus der (scheinbaren) Paradoxie der Offenheit des Schlusses tiefe Wirkung zu ziehen: Der Hörer wird – über das Verklingen des Tonstückes hinaus – zu weiteren Erwägung des Worts eingeladen ... Dem Hörer ist aufgetragen, sich Gedanken über den ungelösten Konflikt zu machen und den Schluß gleichsam selbst zu vollziehen.⁴⁷³

[The final word has since ancient times demanded the emphasis, so that it stays long and insistently in the ear ... Vocal music especially manages to achieve profound effect from the (apparent) paradox of open-endedness: The listener is invited – out beyond the fading of the musical piece – to further consideration of the word ... The listener is given the task of forming thoughts about the unsolved conflict and, in the same way, of fulfilling the cadence himself.]

In the case of “Erinnerung,” the song’s Lied-like lull, accumulated throughout the cycle, veers into a new tonal field and simply breaks off. The once-hurried, beating Schumannian body is now entirely dis-articulated. The spell cast by Eisler’s musical synthesis echoes in the air but is gone, leaving it open to critique in Eisler’s sense, or at least to the responses of different interpretive communities.⁴⁷⁴ Linda Hutcheon’s model of parodic ethos is helpful here; she sees overlapping zones between forms of parody that take on “scornful” or “mocking” qualities and those that use irony to “contest” older material from a position of respect or neutrality.⁴⁷⁵ From this perspective, Eisler respects *and* contests Hölderlin’s depiction of German “Bildung.” The

⁴⁷² Ibid. 217.

⁴⁷³ Ibid. 181, 183, 188.

⁴⁷⁴ Thanks to Jørgen Bruhn for this insight.

⁴⁷⁵ See Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. (New York: Methuen, 2000), 63.

song's ending indicates that fully embracing the image of gentle scholarly earnestness was still too painful and too dangerous in 1943.

Cross-reading and conclusion

Reading Eisler's Hölderlin fragments in John Bryant's terms of "cultural revision" and "adaptive revision,"⁴⁷⁶ they are not only works of art but also acts of interpretation, and, in light of Hölderlin's appropriation under Nazism, intervention. Eisler is not responding to the literary "canon" in a hierarchical way, rebelling against the text in Harold Bloom's models of compensatory, if creative, mis-reading, but rather interacting with his source material in a "dynamic process"⁴⁷⁷ of cultural-political critique. According to a dialogic adaptation approach, Eisler's "selection of parts"⁴⁷⁸ or fragmenting of the texts is what begins the back-and-forth process of reclaiming tainted language and, in turn, allowing it to speak to the next century. With Heidegger's trance-inducing readings of Hölderlin in mind, Eisler's breaking of the texts, and his playing both with and against musical narcosis, allows these adaptations to work against the poet's quasi-mystical and ultimately fascist appropriation in a homeopathic way. Setting Hölderlin's text pieces into a sound-world of ambiguously gendered voice and piano, both of which quote and allude to other voices, Eisler opens his sources to a less conventionally "lyric" and more "novelistic" reading, in Bakhtin's sense of heteroglot orchestration.⁴⁷⁹ What remains of the nineteenth-century poetic world in this music, and what sheds shadowed light back on it, is an elegiac mode in which the voice is distanced, contingent, and already in flight.

⁴⁷⁶ See John Bryant, "Textual identity and adaptive revision: Editing adaptation as a fluid text," in Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, eds., *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 47-51.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid. 51.

⁴⁷⁸ Bruhn, "Dialogizing adaptation studies," in Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen, 72.

⁴⁷⁹ M.M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Kindle locations 2898-3037.

If the thematic elegy can be characterized as creating distance from the experience of loss,⁴⁸⁰ and if the sound-world of German Lieder already takes a position of abstraction⁴⁸¹ from the “songful,” Hanns Eisler’s adaptations of Hölderlin work as a transparent palimpsest, fragmenting the poems and re-functioning them as ghostly Lieder that reveal layers of past cultural material. The texts become more spacious and more distant all at once. Transparency signaled political honesty for Eisler,⁴⁸² and as Claudia Albert has noted, “Verhinderung ‘falscher Tonfülle’ heißt hier die Evokation auch eines lyrischen Zustandes durchschaubar, durchhörbar als Ergebnis einer musikalischen Entwicklung gestalten”⁴⁸³ [“Here the prevention of ‘false sonorities’ also means the evocation of a lyrical state that one can see through, hear through, shaped as the result of musical development”]. At the textual level, metric disruption and added caesura leave “negative space” in Hölderlin’s already paratactic verse, also opening the lyric “I” as an open circuit. Musically, by absorbing the ever- “disarticulating ... Schumannian body,”⁴⁸⁴ Eisler not only adds plurality to this “non-voice” but also absorbs the critical capacity of Schumann’s own ironic “Stimmung” to unsettle socially conditioned materials. If these text-settings are read as vertical, simultaneous, transparent layers, Hölderlin’s “I” no longer speaks from outside time but is embedded *in* time with other voices, most of them long gone. In Eisler’s rushed and interruptive scoring, the singing voice itself is also constantly in flight.

⁴⁸⁰ Lönneker, 14 November 2014.

⁴⁸¹ Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, 144.

⁴⁸² See Eisler’s conversation with Hans Bunge about reading Hölderlin’s “Komm ins Offene” [“Come into the Open”] line as a call toward political frankness, in Bunge, 219.

⁴⁸³ Albert, 125.

⁴⁸⁴ Rodgers, Stephen, “This Body That Beats: Roland Barthes and Robert Schumann’s *Kreisleriana*” in *Indiana Theory Review* Vol. 18/2, 1997, 84.

Reading back into Hölderlin's texts with a sense of this layering among lost voices, and with the more "novelistic" perspective of the *Hollywooder Liederbuch* as a whole,⁴⁸⁵ three aspects of the poetry become more apparent: its elegiac and even pessimistic mood, its paratactic fragility, and its unstable lyric "I." A close second look at "An die Hoffnung" with Eisler's adaptation in mind is illustrative of all three. The text initially reads as a chiliastic poem, with a call toward Hope leading to a description of physical despair and then to a genuinely optimistic turn toward union with nature and a re-invocation of "Aether's daughter." Eisler's setting cuts the poem before this return is possible. Hölderlin's godly comforts, however elusive, now seem even less available. Eisler's music intensifies the text's oscillation between melancholy and anxiety, drawing out the vulnerable question "Wo bist du?"⁴⁸⁶ in "tragic transport" after the poem's first stanza break – a painful contrast to the positive associations with Hope that have come before. Read with this repetition in the ear, even the poem's evocation of stars and flowers appears in a shadowed, "shuddering" light. A post-Eisler reading also links the phrase "Bin ich schon hier"⁴⁸⁷ ["I am here already"] to the "Wo bist du?" question, perhaps as a question itself, in light of the music's rushed, destabilizing movement. Where exactly *is* the lyric "I"? The final line of Eisler's setting – only line 8 of Hölderlin's twenty – opens a particularly revealing "hermeneutic window"⁴⁸⁸ into this darker, more contingent reading. Cut at the word "Herz," perhaps to align with the Schumann allusion at the song's end, this line reads as follows in the source poem, before it continues:

⁴⁸⁵ See Csipák, 217-218.

⁴⁸⁶ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 316.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ See Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 25.

und schon gesanglos
Schlummert das schauernde Herz im Busen.⁴⁸⁹

[and songless
Sleeps my shuddering heart in my breast.]

Reading past this “ending” shows the brittle node between the despairing human heart and the green valley to which the speaker then turns for comfort in Hölderlin’s next stanza. In addition, the heart becomes a separate subject, further breaking down the lyric “I.” This dis-articulation is also an orchestration, with Heiniian/Schumannian allusions on the word “Herz” and in the formal-parodic postlude, making the poem’s single speaker plural. The “body that beats”⁴⁹⁰ is now several bodies, or body parts, and it is also volatile⁴⁹¹ – if heard with Eisler’s ever-pressing, accelerating tempo marks in mind. The stanzas that follow in Hölderlin’s poem now read as a journey of flight *from* despair rather than toward hope, an impossible, even escapist project.

The other five Hölderlin poems adapted by Eisler take on heightened elegiac distance, paratactic fragility, and subjective instability as well. Heard in the rushing, “rasch” tempo tendency of Eisler’s music, the “I” is continually fleeing into exile, or perhaps his or her German homeland is constantly slipping out from underfoot. “Andenken” already evokes the gardens of Bordeaux from a remembered distance; Eisler’s setting lifts this Mediterranean locale into a southern California exile state, abstracting it further. Hölderlin’s line (in the *Hyperion*-related section cut by Eisler) “Wo aber sind die Freunde?”⁴⁹² [“But where are the friends?”] now carries additional vulnerability, similar to that in the “Wo bist du?” line in “An die Hoffnung.” “Der

⁴⁸⁹ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 316.

⁴⁹⁰ See Rodgers, 84.

⁴⁹¹ For a discussion of the “split” or “copied” body, see Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 62-63.

⁴⁹² Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 361.

Frieden” most obviously takes on an elegiac quality in light of Eisler’s title, “Elegie 1943” and in his setting only the poem’s most despairing lines. The fourth poem Eisler set, “Die Heimat,” is already a short, aphoristic piece; reading it with Eisler’s self-interrupting music in mind (the disarticulated “Schumannian body” once again) accentuates the breakable quality of the longer poems that surround it in the cycle. The fleeting, breath-stopped quality of this poem links it to another “Heimat” poem likely composed several years later, between 1803 and 1805, which begins with the phrase “Und niemand weiß” [“and no one knows”] followed by a long white space before what may or may not be a continuation of the poem, broken lines evoking the natural world amid the ringing of bells.⁴⁹³ Eisler’s fifth Hölderlin setting anonymizes the poem “Heidelberg” to refer to any German city. Disrupting the poem’s Asclepiadean meter, and alternating between lyrical and percussive phrasing, Eisler splits Hölderlin’s subject between a songlike longing for home and a distanced, syllabic commentary that sounds impersonal rather than “true.” If heard with the song’s final, decontextualized chord that sounds like a dissonant crash, the poem’s “I” sounds on the verge of explosion. Reading Hölderlin’s “Gesang des Deutschen” in light of Eisler’s “Erinnerung” gives weight to its pained questioning of what has become of a post-French-Revolution “Vaterland” and at the same time takes on its more easily appropriated nationalist elements. In the final moment of Eisler’s “Erinnerung,” the singing voice breaks off on a sudden jazz chord shift, as if these elements are too hot to the touch. The poem’s gentle evocation of German earnestness and industry is exposed in its charged ideological potential, and the speaking “I” flees.

Overall, cross-reading Hölderlin’s poetry in light of Eisler’s settings highlights the fragility of the poet’s impulse toward wholeness and disarticulates the lyric “I” along with the

⁴⁹³ Ibid. 382, and Kommentar, 1061, 1128.

Schumannian body it now shares. Hölderlin's "voice," now un-gendered and plural, reveals its own shifting perspectives and breaks in tone as well.⁴⁹⁴ What Eisler saw as a danger in using past aesthetic material without critical contemporary attention – the ossification of this traditional material⁴⁹⁵ – is exactly what his music exposes in the text. Unlike Heidegger's spiral, flowing readings of Hölderlin, and unlike rhapsodic nationalist interpretations of his work even on the left, Eisler's adaptations lean into lyricism only to show the poems' bones, and where they break. The composer tends to cut the poems mid-utterance, in moments that refer to a utopian past or future or to metaphysical presences, making the new poems "Bruchstücke" (fragments) indeed. Eisler's dialectical push-back against Hölderlin's appropriation reaches a breaking point at the end of the cycle, in "Gesang des Deutschen"/"Erinnerung," revealing the methodological closeness of composer and poet, for whom the lyric "I" reaches one breaking point after another. Yet the poet's grand experiment, his urge toward reconciliation, remains compelling: when Brecht first read the final lines of Eisler's "Gesang des Deutschen" fragment, he responded to this brief utopian vision of Germany in a way that surprised even Eisler. The composer later recalled that Brecht "sagte ... schlüpfend vor Begeisterung: 'wo deine Sonne ... leuchtet.' Da war Brecht ganz hingerissen. Er hatte das Gedicht noch nie gelesen. Brecht war hingerissen, obwohl er sagte, 'Hanns, bist du nationalistisch'"⁴⁹⁶ ["[Brecht] said ... choking with excitement: 'where your sun ... shines.' Brecht was completely carried away. He had never read the poem. Brecht was carried away, although he said, 'Hanns, you're nationalistic'"]. That even the master of critical estrangement could find himself in thrall to Hölderlin reveals the stakes in Eisler's

⁴⁹⁴ See Albert, 153.

⁴⁹⁵ See Eisler, "Einiges über die Krise der kapitalistischen Musik und über den Aufbau der sozialistischen Musikkultur," in *Musik und Politik*, 315.

⁴⁹⁶ Bunge, 195.

project. By taking on not only the contested German poet but also the often sentimentalized sound-world of Schubert and Schumann, Eisler re-functioned both as “negative Lyrik,” an elegiac after-image of politically compromised cultural material. The Hölderlin cycle voices dissent through textual breakage and musical synthesis, in order to work homeopathically against fascist-sanctioned lyricism. At the same time, the music’s lyric sway threatens to overtake its critical agenda, inciting longing for a vanished sound-world, however compromised. This may be one reason Matthias Goerne’s recent recording of the *Hölderlin-Fragmente* has incited controversy among Eisler scholars, many of whom find his extreme lyricism and less-than-crisp diction out of step with the composer’s typically clean, percussive gestus – and some who admit to taking guilty pleasure in the experience. My approach to singing this music is to give the text its due in clarity and let the tempo and dynamic markings bring its push-and-pull between lyricism and estrangement to life. The cycle’s elegiac distance becomes striking when sung with minimal vibrato and close attention to the score, and yet the lyric sway of Eisler’s *melos* builds to such a point that when the piano interrupts it in several dramatic, dissonant endings, the break sounds less convincing than the “threat” of beauty. Eisler’s fragments embody aesthetic inheritance that, like Brecht’s character Mother Courage and Weill’s song “Mack the Knife,” overcome their estranging stance to take on a life of their own. This aesthetic presence may exert enough force in its own right, over time, to resist rigid appropriation.

CHAPTER 3
MAGIC WORDS?
GOETHE IN EAST BERLIN

*Saure Wochen! Frohe Feste! Sei dein künftig, künftig Zauberwort.*⁴⁹⁷

[Hard weeks! Happy feasts! Let these be your ever future magic words.]

Goethe/Eisler, “Der Schatzgräber”

Introduction

During the founding years of the German Democratic Republic, reclaiming the legacies of Goethe, Bach, and other cultural icons became an important and sometimes controversial project. As Kyle Frackman and Larson Powell have noted in their 2015 study *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic*, the East German “narrative of liberation” paradoxically drew on “deep continuities with the German past, both in terms of personnel and inherited cultural baggage.”⁴⁹⁸ Following the Soviet pattern of taking up past “Kulturgut” to speak to the future, the GDR developed a doctrine of “Erbeaneignung” [“appropriation of heritage”], first bringing the working class into contact with older bourgeois aesthetic material and then transforming it “into the narration of past, present, and future class struggles.”⁴⁹⁹ Though the East German

⁴⁹⁷ Hanns Eisler, “Der Schatzgräber,” in *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 87.

⁴⁹⁸ Kyle Frackman and Larson Powell, eds., *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic* (New York: Camden House, 2015), 4.

⁴⁹⁹ Matthias Tischer, “Exile — Remigration — Socialist Realism: The Role of Classical Music in the Works of Paul Dessau,” in *Ibid.*, 187.

cultural leadership was by no means uniform between the early 1950s and the fall of the Wall, it generally supported efforts to re-frame composer biographies in terms of Socialist tendencies, claim regional heroes like Goethe and Bach from the Eastern provinces, and even “rewrite” some of their material – as in Eisler’s and Paul Dessau’s formal parodies of Bach. Certainly composers working in the GDR experienced tension between ideological and aesthetic demands; for all his sense of internal Socialist “hearing” of text and music, underlying his own aesthetic control,⁵⁰⁰ Eisler is reported to have said he “did not know how write a socialist realist flute sonata.”⁵⁰¹ Had he been able to do so, the music might have sounded like a tonally predictable folksong or march. “Ideal” vocal music in this vein would be set to nationalist texts praising family, work, and homeland, though East German composers like Dessau and Kurt Schwaen shared Eisler’s more nuanced engagement with Socialist aesthetics. Schwaen’s music is notable for its combination of sophisticated texts by such poets as Günter Kunert and the asymmetrical meters of Eastern European dance music. Even his songs composed for East German schoolchildren, aside from the baldly didactic “Wenn Mutti früh zur Arbeit geht” [“When Mama leaves early for work”] show thoughtful nuance.

Despite these tensions between creativity and ideology, Eisler’s return to Berlin after his U.S. exile and deportation situated him perfectly for participation in the anti-fascist, Socialist framing of aesthetic heritage. He made an explicit effort to play by Soviet-approved rules when, writing a statement for the Second International Congress of Composers and Musicologists in Prague in May 1948, he warned against “extreme subjectivism” in favor of “concrete” musical

⁵⁰⁰ See Bunge, 191.

⁵⁰¹ Frackman and Powell, 6.

forms such as oratorio and mass chorus.⁵⁰² By 1949 he was lionized not only as a favorite collaborator with Brecht but also as the composer of the East German national hymn, “Auferstanden aus Ruinen” [“Risen from the Ruins”]. His *Goethe-Rhapsodie*, composed to commemorate the poet and to celebrate the founding of the GDR, is his best-known setting of Goethe, though several others will be considered here. Due to Eisler’s efforts to write music in a simpler, more direct musical style during this period, his Goethe settings have often been dismissed as less dialectically rigorous or critically challenging than his better-known works.⁵⁰³ This chapter engages with Arnold Pistiak’s recent work, in addition to Gerd Rienäcker’s earlier study of the *Rhapsodie*, to give this music the attention it deserves. My approach is to continue in the Bakhtinian vein, and, countering Pistiak’s take on this music as mostly uncritical, to show that formal play and polyphony in Eisler’s Goethe settings do enact critique, as the music voices resistance to nationalist rigidity, despite Eisler’s own Party-line claims. This hermeneutic of suspicion is borne out in close readings of the *Rhapsodie* and cantata *Das Vorbild*, which work as modernist (coded as “subjective” in Eisler’s Prague edict) collages of many voices, from overlapping characters in Goethe’s *Faust II* to film-score citations and the music of Mahler, Bach, Schoenberg, and Brahms. Eisler’s polyphony occurs in orchestral texture as well as in the solo voice itself, despite received, gendered tropes the music calls up. Multiple subject positions

⁵⁰² See Calico, *The Politics of Opera in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1961*, 37.

⁵⁰³ See Arnold Pistiak, *Darf ich auch Verse von Goethe verwenden? Hanns Eislers Goethe-Kompositionen* (Berlin: edition bodoni, 2013), 66-67. Eisler’s music of this period has long been seen by Theodor Adorno, Eberhard Reblings, Eckhard John, Günter Mayer, and other scholars of cultural-musical history as weak or irrelevant in comparison to his other work. Gerd Rienäcker, Peter Schweinhardt, in a partially apologist response, and more recently Arnold Pistiak have applied serious musicological inquiry to works often critiqued for lack of complexity or even for “inauthenticity.” See also Gerd Rienäcker, “Vorbilder – Landkarten – Maximen? Über Schwierigkeiten, aufs Neue zu Beginnen,” in *Hanns Eisler. ‘s müßt dem Himmel Höllenangst werden*, ed. Maren Köster (Berlin and Hofheim am Taunus: Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, 1998), 11-24.

in the singing voice are especially noteworthy in the *Rhapsodie*, set to lines spoken by Mephistopheles in disguise (as the female Phorkyas) and by the already plural Chorus. As Mikhail Bakhtin notes in his text on Dostoevsky's poetics, it is possible for "[t]he consciousness of a character [to be] given as *someone else's* consciousness, yet at the same time it is not turned into an object, is not closed, does not become a simple object of the author's consciousness."⁵⁰⁴ Of course the "floating" indirect address in Dostoevsky is limited to the novel on the page and cannot always be voiced by one clear narrator or another if read aloud. That said, other means of composite voicing are possible in both media. Thomas Mann's Schoenberg-Nietzsche blending in the character of Adrian Leverkühn exemplifies this approach in the novel, as noted in the previous chapter; his friend Eisler shows how human and instrumental voices can also work as open circuits. As in the "polyphonic novel," though in materially voiced, musical form,⁵⁰⁵ Eisler's Goethe settings are not fixed ideological containers but rather porous systems that allow for various "speakers" to appear via citation and association; they are a carnival of "high" and "low" musical forms; they swing between various "Stimmungen," from mourning to hope and from comfort to unease; they embrace this kaleidoscopic aspect not only of Goethe's already montage-like *Faust II* but also draw it out in his measured Weimar-classic-era poems on human wisdom and responsibility.

This chapter first provides background on Eisler's early work with Goethe texts while still in California exile, followed by a section on Goethe's reception history from the Nazi era to

⁵⁰⁴ M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), Kindle Edition, location 817.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid. Bakhtin differentiates between the "image of language" in the printed book, as a "mute mode of perception," and live speech. See M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 354, 379.

postwar “Goethe communities” in both East and West Germany.⁵⁰⁶ Eisler’s commission to compose a Goethe work to celebrate the new German Democratic Republic in 1949 Weimar is considered in this context. Close readings and musical analysis of the *Rhapsodie* form the center of this chapter, followed by a discussion of two other Goethe-related works from the early 1950s, the Bach-parodic cantata *Das Vorbild* and Eisler’s failed opera project, *Johannes Faustus*. This chapter traces ways in which the “formalist” elements of polyphonic play in these Goethe settings, as well as in Eisler’s libretto for the never-composed *Faustus*, brought him into conflict with East German cultural officials in the early 1950s. Eisler may have been assigned to voice hope for a new era, but his music continued to work against too-easy nationalist appropriation of German literary material, and to signal human vulnerability and polyvocality in the midst of political change. The chapter’s final cross-reading, according to the dialogic model of adaptation analysis undertaken throughout this project, will show how polyphonic simultaneity in Eisler’s Goethe settings foregrounds this element in the source texts.

Exile songs

While still in the U.S. during the Second World War, Hanns Eisler began working with texts by Goethe, whose poetry later became foundational to postwar German cultural rebuilding in both the East and West. Eisler’s 1946 “Der Schatzgräber” [“The Treasure-seeker”] is set to Goethe’s 1797 ballad of the same title. The composer also chose Goethe’s “Glückliche Fahrt” [“Fortunate Journey”], which had been set together with its partner-poem, “Meeres Stille” [“Calm Sea”] by both Beethoven and Mendelssohn, as an orchestral overture, in the nineteenth

⁵⁰⁶ Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 133.

century. Eisler's setting indicates hope for "seeing land" ["Schon seh' ich das Land!"⁵⁰⁷] in a soaring soprano voice that returns in his 1949 *Rhapsodie*. A brief look at these exile songs sets the stage for this chapter's focus on the Goethe works Eisler took up in the early GDR.

An autograph in the Ernst Busch Archive places Eisler's setting of Goethe's "Der Schatzgräber" after the Hölderlin cycle, between 1944 and 1946, when Eisler sent it to Berlin after the war.⁵⁰⁸ The song works as a formal parody of Schubert in the American musical-theater mode. The more subtle parodic take on German Lieder in the Hölderlin cycle has vanished; this song sounds more like an incidental number in a Brecht play, exaggerating its own awkward place between musical worlds. Goethe's poem is a gentle morality tale, told in the first person, in which a treasure-seeker recalls once attempting to cast a spell in order to find gold – and finds something different in the magic circle he or she calls up: a radiant young boy, who instructs him to get busy doing actual work instead of trying to conjure up treasure, to "[t]rinke Mut des reinen Lebens"⁵⁰⁹ ["drink the courage of pure life"] in daily labor and in happy meals with friends. Keeping Goethe's strophic form and Schubert's cut-time, jaunty melodic shape, Eisler adds jazz chords, chromatic grace notes, and heavy-footed sforzando leaps in the bass to evoke old folksong tropes in a modern setting. It is as if the "Stormy Weather" chord change, which leaves the ending of the *Hölderlin-Fragmente* disconcertingly open, has taken over Eisler's re-functioning of the Lied form. The song's middle section takes Schubert's melody to an almost uncomfortably high range for the voice, which is required to remain light and quiet over repeated keyboard chords. Overall, Eisler maintains the poem's light, storytelling quality until the

⁵⁰⁷ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke*, Vol. 1, Gedichte und Epen, Hamburger Ausgabe, Erich Trunz, ed. (Munich: C.H Beck, 1974), 242.

⁵⁰⁸ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, commentary, 100.

⁵⁰⁹ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 87.

beginning of the final verse, which he treats in triple meter with exaggerated tenderness, before returning to the “leicht”⁵¹⁰ [“light”] melody, ending the song with a repeated “künftig,” the word referring to the future in which the worker’s daily life becomes his “Zauberwort” [“magic word”].⁵¹¹ This last word, like the final “leuchtet” that ends the Hölderlin cycle, is quickly tossed off in eighth notes. The piano ends on heavy, fortissimo octaves on the fifth of the D major tonic – a musically literal half cadence, once again open-ended. While not parodic grotesquerie, the song does recall Eisler’s 1920s Heine settings in its registral extreme and theatrical exaggeration.

That Eisler conceived “Der Schatzgräber” for female voice,⁵¹² unlike the baritone usually associated with his 1940s Hölderlin songs, also indicates a new approach. In a recording with soprano Roswitha Trexler, the voice takes on an almost-panicked quality, singing quick syllabic rhythm on high F-sharps, in the first-person account of making a magic circle and then meeting the wise young boy.⁵¹³ This narrator may be a “remembering subject” [“sich erinnernde Subjekt”⁵¹⁴], but she avoids weighted vocalism that might indicate pained dwelling on past greed, even in her opening lines in the low chest-voice range. Eisler seems to be locating his non-elegaic mode in cultural associations with the female voice as light and free. Arnold Pistiak holds that Eisler takes Goethe’s text seriously, especially in its valorization of work, while acknowledging Markus Roth’s sense of something “fremd” [“strange” or “estranging”] in the

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Arnold Pistiak, *Darf ich auch Verse von Goethe verwenden? Hanns Eislers Goethe-Kompositionen* (Berlin: Edition Bodoni, 2013), 3.

⁵¹³ Hanns Eisler, *Lieder und Kantaten im Exil*, with Trexler, Czapski, Rundfunk-Jugendchor Leipzig, Pommer, Audio CD, Berlin ADD, 77.

⁵¹⁴ Pistiak, 15.

song, thematically and stylistically.⁵¹⁵ Certainly “Der Schatzgräber” sounds quite different from other music in the *Hollywooder Liederbuch*. It is not an elegy; in my view it offers a positive alternative to California capitalism’s get-rich-quick temptations (perhaps Eisler’s own, with his mid-1940s success in securing film music contracts⁵¹⁶), while exploiting the musical language of both Hollywood and Goethe-infused German cultural heritage. In addition to over-the-top lyricism in the final verse, the unsettling quality of the song’s ending complicates the whole, however. The quick last word and pounding postlude can be read as “aktivistisch,”⁵¹⁷ as Pistiak notes, putting the word in quotes to suggest some distance even in this musical forcefulness. The final half-cadence also allows the listener to ask how much force “magic words,” whether invoking a trance state or providing the more earthly magic of everyday life, can have. Considering the collective “spell” induced by Nazi rallies and propaganda during the 1940s, and the aesthetic narcosis Eisler played with and against in his Hölderlin settings of that era, such a critical opening links that more subtle cycle to this theatrical song.

Eisler set Goethe’s “Glückliche Fahrt” in 1946, turning to the poet’s Weimar-period, classical verse after Germany’s capitulation in 1945. The poem, usually paired with the more pessimistic “Meeres Stille” about deadly calm seas, looks forward through breaking fog toward sunlight and land sighted after a long journey. The double-poem reads as follows:

“Meeres Stille”

Tief Stille herrscht im Wasser,
Ohne Regung ruht das Meer,
Und bekümmert sieht der Schiffer
Glatte Fläche rings umher.

“Glückliche Fahrt”

Die Nebel zerreißen,
Der Himmel ist helle,
Und Äolus löset
Das ängstliche Band.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Wißmann, 161.

⁵¹⁷ Pistiak, 16.

Keine Luft von keiner Seite!
Todesstille fürchterlich!
In der ungeheuern Weite
Reget keine Welle sich.

Es säuseln die Winde,
Es rührt sich der Schiffer.
Geschwinde! Geschwinde!
Es teilt sich die Welle,
Es naht sich die Ferne;
Schon seh' ich das Land!⁵¹⁸

[“Calm Seas”

Deep stillness rules the water,
The sea rests without motion,
And the sailor sadly sees
Smooth surfaces everywhere.
No air from any side!
Terrible dead-stillness!
In the immense distance
No wave stirs.

“Fortunate Journey”

The fog tears apart,
The sky is bright,
And Aeolus loosens
The fearful band.
The winds whisper,
The sailor rouses himself.
Swiftly! Swiftly!
The waves break open,
The distance grows closer;
Already I see land!]

Goethe's meters in these two poems do not directly mirror each other; rather, the first mimics the movement of waves in its regular four-beat trochaic lines, while the second cuts this meter in half, speeding the tempo and creating a sense of urgency in approaching land. In Beethoven's 1814/15 choral setting of the double poem, Goethe's words speak to the composer's turn against Napoleon and toward a better future for the German-speaking lands.⁵¹⁹ At first glance, Eisler's choice to set only the second, more hopeful poem indicates a look forward, without the weight of “Todesstille”⁵²⁰ [“deadly stillness”]. He did not make cuts to Goethe's short text, as he had to Hölderlin's; yet leaving out the first part of the “Doppelgedicht” functions as a cut in itself, and a break from the traditional mode of setting these words. It is noteworthy that Goethe's pairing is a

⁵¹⁸ Goethe, 242.

⁵¹⁹ Pistiak, 9.

⁵²⁰ Goethe, 242.

dialectical one, with each poem pulling on the other, until the longer, faster “Glückliche Fahrt” subsumes its antithesis, in the Hegelian sense. What is lost in Eisler’s removal of “Meeres Stille” returns in his own dialectical setting of the second poem.

“Glückliche Fahrt,” set for soprano and orchestra, is scored both “Mäßig” [“measured”] and “grazioso”⁵²¹ [“graceful”], a careful balance that once again exploits the soprano voice for its associations with lightness. Eisler slows Goethe’s tempo by foregrounding the poem’s underlying triple meter rather than its duple feet; a rocking 6/8 time is consistent with traditional European scoring of barcarolles and other forms of “water” music. In this sense, Eisler’s setting subsumes the missing “Meeres Stille” by absorbing its wavelike movement. Already experimenting with the simpler and more direct style that would mark his early-1950s music, Eisler works within a G-major frame divided in comfortable thirds and fourths. At the same time, he complicates this tonal field with auxiliary dissonances and ends the piece with a postlude as jarringly fortissimo as it is securely tonal.

Fig. 3.1



⁵²¹ Hanns Eisler, “Glückliche Fahrt,” in *Lieder und Kantaten*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1957), 49.

Arnold Pistiak attributes these elements of unease to a sense that “das Land wohl gesehen wird, aber durchaus nicht erreicht ist”⁵²² [“the land is already seen but certainly not yet reached”]. The singer’s repetition of the final line (“Schon seh’ ich das Land”) three times indicates breathless, perhaps incredulous excitement. Still, Eisler’s dialectical mode of composition is as present in this work as in his Hölderlin cycle, this time in a way that does not subsume contradictory elements, as Goethe’s diptych does, but rather questions the work’s own glowing outlook. With his homeland in ruins and his career hounded by the F.B.I. in the United States, Eisler’s musical ambivalence is hardly surprising. A similar instability would mark his ostensibly celebratory *Goethe-Rhapsodie* in 1949, also set for soprano and orchestra, this time in the new East German nation. Whether or not the composer intended to voice as much ambivalence as hope, the music slips free of any rigidly optimistic agenda and creates an unsettling sonic landscape.

Music of ruin and renewal

Eisler’s return journey was anything but fortunate. In the wave of anti-Communist suspicion in the U.S. government, Eisler found himself before the House Committee on Un-American Activities from September 24 to 26, 1947.⁵²³ He defended his part in founding the International Music Bureau, stood by his openly Communist brother Gerhart, and emphasized his work as a composer (“I stick to my music”⁵²⁴) over his own Communist leanings, exasperating the Chairman, J. Parnell Thomas, with hard-to-pin-down details of his relationship to the Party in 1920s Berlin. Eisler himself showed exasperation and biting humor during the hearing, for

⁵²² Pistiak, 12.

⁵²³ Wißmann, 163.

⁵²⁴ Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding Hanns Eisler*, U.S. House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, First Session, Public Law 601, September 24, 25, and 26, 1947 (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1947), 42.

example when confronted with his having been called “Comrade Eisler” in a Moscow literature journal: ““Yes. That is usual in the Soviet Union. You don’t call a man “mister.” ””⁵²⁵ When asked repeatedly whether the words to Eisler’s much earlier theater song based on a Gorki text about the Russian Revolution (“You must be ready to take over”) indicated a wish to take over the United States, the composer gave terse and equally repetitive answers. He finally turned the absurd question aside: “I am a guest, a stranger here, and the labor movement can handle their affairs themselves.”⁵²⁶ The H.U.A.C. cases against both Brecht and Eisler showed as much lack of historical perspective as they did artistic tone-deafness. As Anthony Heilbut has noted,

When Bertolt Brecht testified before H.U.A.C., he recalled that the Nazis had first targeted him when he was a twenty-year-old balladeer. It took them fifteen years to punish him with exile. Now he and his collaborator Hanns Eisler were being condemned by Americans for writing songs that had been composed twenty years earlier: nothing was ever done with or forgotten.⁵²⁷

Despite the efforts of Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Charlie Chaplin, and other well-known supporters, Eisler and his wife Lou were deported from the U.S. in March 1948, after a farewell concert in the New York City Town Hall.⁵²⁸

Eisler first traveled to Vienna, where he reconnected with his first wife and their son Georg, and then to the international music conference in Prague, where he spoke on the “Gesellschaftliche Grundfragen der modernen Musik” [“Fundamental Social Questions of Modern Music”], still voicing a critique of Schoenberg in his search for a musical language more

⁵²⁵ Ibid. 43.

⁵²⁶ Ibid. 40.

⁵²⁷ Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America, from the 1930s to the Present* (New York: Viking, 1983), 366.

⁵²⁸ Wißmann, 165.

responsive to the immediate postwar era,⁵²⁹ in terms belying his own modernist bent. Eisler then returned to a devastated Berlin, where the thousands of dead and missing were still difficult to count, where the trauma of systematic rape was everywhere but rarely spoken of, and where rubble, hastily buried corpses, abandoned streetcars, Soviet tanks, and waste still filled the city's streets.⁵³⁰ Amid the ruins, Eisler could not help but hear echoes of Nazi march music and the "barbaric" usurpation of even his and Brecht's *Kampflied* style:

Als wir nach Berlin zurückkamen [1948] – wir hatten doch übers Radio diese scheußlichen Hitlerlieder gehört – da hatte ich einen solchen Ekel gegen das Marschieren überhaupt ... Brecht hat das ... verstanden, [aber er] vermißte auch unsre plebejischen Vulgarismen, die ja sehr notwendig sind. Aber es hat sich irgendwie ein Reif über dieses Genre gelegt durch Mißbrauch der Barbaren. Man mußte einige Jahre lang sehr achtgeben. Man brauchte eine Entwöhnungszeit. Leider ist ... [sie] viel zu kurz gewesen. Was ich heute im Radio höre von ... Kollegen, hat oft einen peinlichen Beigeschmack der Erinnerung an diese Zeit ...⁵³¹

[When we came back to Berlin [1948] – yes, we had heard these atrocious Hitler-songs on the radio – there I felt such disgust toward march music in general ... Brecht ... understood this, [but he] also missed our plebeian vulgarities that are really very important. But somehow this genre had accumulated rime, through the barbarians' misuse. One had to take great care for a few years. There needed to be a withdrawal period. Unfortunately this ... has been too short. What I hear today on the radio from ... colleagues, often has an embarrassing aftertaste of the memory of that time ...]

Eisler's response to this need for a "withdrawal period" was a more direct, ostensibly simple compositional language. This "neue Einfachheit" ["new simplicity"], which was part of Eisler's intention in the *Goethe-Rhapsodie*, was to be easily understood by everyone, as a way of relating

⁵²⁹ Ibid. 166.

⁵³⁰ For a collection of photographs of Berlin in the immediate aftermath of the war, see Antonia Meiners, *Berlin 1945: Eine Chronik in Bildern* (Berlin: Nicolai Verlag, 2005). Also see Martha Anne Sprigge, *Abilities to Mourn: Musical Commemoration in the German Democratic Republic (1945-1989)*, doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago Department of Music, 2013.

⁵³¹ Bunge, 51, also quoted in Heike Amos, *Auferstanden aus Ruinen ... Die Nationalhymne der DDR 1949 bis 1990* (Berlin: Dietz, 1997), 91.

“mit dem Volk auf du and du” [“to the people in the (informal) you and you”].⁵³² Eisler also wanted to avoid the ease of “automatic” musical association that often accompanies classical-music allusions and tropes,⁵³³ aware as always of the danger of aesthetic trance states. As is often the case in Eisler’s music, however, the Socialist ideal of straightforward realism and the anti-fascist allergy to “traditional” forms of beauty are complicated by polyphony and formal play.

The first major manifestation of Eisler’s “neue Einfachheit” – and of its playful complication – appears in the 1949 setting of a Johannes Becher poem for the East German national hymn, “Auferstanden aus Ruinen.” The project began as a composers’ competition that Eisler’s melody won, after he played it for Becher on a piano in Chopin’s birth house in Warsaw and the project received support from the SED (Socialist Unity) party and the state leadership.⁵³⁴ Unlike Eisler’s “Solidaritätslied” of 1929/30, this call to collective “Stimmung” does not include a disruptive break but proceeds with a straightforward tonal melody in F major, shifts into energetic dotted rhythm in the middle section, with traces of Eisler’s percussive style in the accompaniment, and then yields to a truly hymn-like, tonally grounded ending on sustained half notes. This is a case of masterful popular songwriting that varies but does not disturb the music’s flow. Eisler’s formal play is still at work here, however: the hymn’s opening melody is an off-kilter echo of the Haydn theme on which the problematic “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles” anthem is based, its stepwise direction shifted within the same hexachord. It almost sounds as if Eisler has turned the older melody, still linked with Nazism just after the war, upside-down. This

⁵³² Wißmann, 177. Eisler was likely playing on the phrase “neue Sachlichkeit” from the 1920s.

⁵³³ See Hanns Eisler, “Manifest,” in *Musik und Politik. Gesammelte Werke*, Series 3, Vol. 2, ed. Günter Mayer (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1982), 576.

⁵³⁴ Amos, 42, 56.

material parody can also be seen as part of, not separate from, Eisler's dialectical method, in its resistance to narcosis in the body politic. Claudia Albert describes the project's tension this way:

Die 1949 komponierte Nationalhymne ist hierfür ein besonders instruktives Beispiel, weil sie naturgemäß von größter Sinnfälligkeit sein mußte; sie mußte sofort mitgesungen werden könnten und zugleich gerade wegen ihrer politischen Funktion besonders wirksame Schutzvorrichtungen gegen den demagogischen Effekt des musikalischen Rausches enthalten.⁵³⁵

[The national hymn composed in 1949 is an especially instructive example of this, because it naturally had to be quite obvious; singers must be able to join in singing it immediately, and at the same time, because of its political function, it must also contain particularly potent safeguards against the demagogic effect of musical intoxication.]

Instead of letting the Haydn melody echo in comfortable familiarity, Eisler challenges it – and opens it up to future disturbance. As Heike Amos has noted, “[d]ie Verwandtschaft beider Melodien und die Singbarkeit des Becher-Textes auf die Haydn-Melodie ... haben in der Vergangenheit manch kabarettistischen Spaß bei der Mischung von Texten und Melodien beider deutschen Hymnen provoziert”⁵³⁶ [“the connection between the melodies and the fact that one can easily sing the Becher text to the Haydn melody ... have in the past provoked a great deal of cabaret-style fun in the mixing of both German hymns’ texts and melodies”]. The music’s similarity to Peter Kreuder’s song “Goodbye Johnny” led to plagiarism accusations, a sign of Eisler’s ability to almost-cite familiar sources, often more than one at the same time, in his polyphonic formal play. His anthem was quickly popularized on the radio, in newspapers, and in schools and political groups; it was officially declared the German Democratic Republic’s national hymn in February 1950.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁵ Claudia Albert, *Das schwierige Handwerk des Hoffens: Hanns Eislers “Hollywooder Liederbuch”* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991), 218.

⁵³⁶ Amos, 54.

⁵³⁷ Ibid. 61-62.

Goethe, east and west

During the war years, Goethe's reception in Germany, like Hölderlin's, underwent a split between nationalistic/National Socialist and Socialist/Marxist interpretations. Even in the late nineteenth century, the figure of Goethe had taken on an anti-parliamentary role that infected his twentieth-century reception. As Wolf Lepenies notes,

In imperial Germany, Goethe's skepticism toward the realm of politics in general was misused as an argument against party politics in particular – as if political parties, which had so piqued the Kaiser, had already existed in Goethe's time. The mistrust of parliamentary democracy that would later contribute to the downfall of the Weimar Republic was also nourished by reference to a distorted picture of Goethe.⁵³⁸

Already associated with Lebensphilosophie and identified with the Stefan George circle, Goethe's organicism in scientific inquiry and in poetry was easily absorbed into the National Socialist privileging of rootedness and the body.⁵³⁹ Valorizing the Faust figure in particular as an example of German cultural-mythological continuity, Nazi-sympathetic critics counted the “faustischen Streben” [“Faustian striving”] as fundamental to the German personality and, in the context of racist biological research, as a manifestation of a “gott-menschlichen Berufung”⁵⁴⁰ [“a godly-human calling”]. In the early 1930s, critics Gerhard Hildebrand and Theodor Hacker warned against the stylization and justification of Faust as an “Übermensch” figure; after the war, this “anti-titanic” reception⁵⁴¹ competed with new nationalist readings in both East and West Germany. In the West, Karl Jaspers voiced alarm, as did his prominent student Richard Alewyn,

⁵³⁸ Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 157.

⁵³⁹ See Theo Buck, ed., *Goethe Handbuch*, Vol. 2 (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 1997), 487-488, and Robert E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and His Circle* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 215.

⁵⁴⁰ Karl Gabler, *Faust-Mephisto der deutsche Mensch*, cited in *Ibid.*, 488.

⁵⁴¹ Buck, 491.

“stunned by the nonchalance with which the Germans used Goethe to come to grips with their recent past. He insisted that one could not praise Goethe and at the same time forget Hitler ... the country’s moral topography was forever characterized by the proximity of Weimar and Buchenwald.”⁵⁴² Jaspers inflected his response with a religious-ethical sense of lost roots,⁵⁴³ a metaphor Hannah Arendt, also his student, took up in her 1950 essay “Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany”⁵⁴⁴ – problematically, in light of the fascist fetishizing of roots by Arendt’s other former mentor, Martin Heidegger. Goethe reception outside Germany tended to take issue with postwar “defeatist reading[s],”⁵⁴⁵ bolstering West German rehabilitation of the “titanic” Faust, while also fostering philological and psychoanalytic interpretations.⁵⁴⁶

After the war, the newly founded German Democratic Republic – and the SED in particular – took on the role of liberator and custodian of the cultural inheritance compromised under Nazism, until a socialist Germany, freed from Western imperialism, would be re-united.⁵⁴⁷ Goethe became the “moral handyman” of choice in this restorative project, functioning as no less than “a godfather of the socialist state” whose works would be read and recognized by East Germans at a far higher rate than among their Western counterparts over the next fifty years.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴² Lepenies, 160-161.

⁵⁴³ Buck, 491.

⁵⁴⁴ See Hannah Arendt, “The Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany,” in *Commentary*, X/10 (1950), 248-269.

⁵⁴⁵ See Stuart Atkins, “Faustforschung und Faustdeutung seit 1945,” in *Euphorion*, 53 (1959), 422-440.

⁵⁴⁶ Buck, 492-496.

⁵⁴⁷ See Joy Calico, “Für eine neue deutsche Nationaloper: Opera in the Discourses of Unification and Legitimation in the German Democratic Republic,” in Applegate and Potter, 190-191.

⁵⁴⁸ Lepenies, 160-161. “In 1949, the year the Federal Republic was founded, the Allensbach Institute, the German equivalent of the Gallup Institute, asked a representative sample of Germans about their

At the same time, negating the very concept of tradition exploited by the Nazis became an important task for the East German cultural elite, mainly former Communist Party members who had been in exile in Moscow. For the population in Berlin, as frightened by peace as by war after the often violent (especially toward women) Russian liberation, this re-orientation required forming a new sense of local cultural identity based on the working and farming classes.⁵⁴⁹ Reclaiming “high” cultural icons became a matter of “Erbe” [“inheritance” or “heritage”], not “Tradition,” in the sometimes messy process of detachment from the bourgeois and National Socialist past. As Astrid Henning has pointed out, “[d]ie frühe DDR war weder eine bürgerliche noch eine antibürgerlich Gesellschaft. Vielmehr wird in den ersten Jahren das bürgerliche Erbe einer Neuinterpretation unterworfen” [“the early GDR was neither a bourgeois nor an anti-bourgeois society. Bourgeois heritage was subjected much more to a new interpretation].” In this transitional period, such re-interpretation looked back in history to show that key German cultural figures had *pre*-figured Socialism in their lives and work.⁵⁵⁰ The revolutionary aspects of Heine’s writings were played up, for example, while his monarchist tendencies became invisible.⁵⁵¹ In Goethe’s case, such reductive treatments painted the poet as, if not a

knowledge of and their relationship to Goethe. Generously funded by a large television station (ZDF), it was repeated in 1999, when the 250th anniversary of the poet’s birth was celebrated with pomp and circumstance. ... Asked in 1949 whether they considered Goethe the typical German, half of the West Germans answered ‘Yes.’ In 1999, however, only 31 percent of the West Germans regarded Goethe as the typical German, but 50 percent of the East Germans still did. In 1949, 40 percent of the West Germans could recite a poem by Goethe, compared with only 10 percent fifty years later. Once more, the East Germans did much better: 25 percent of them knew a Goethe poem by heart. Most striking was the East-West divide when the Germans were asked if they had read Goethe’s *Faust*: 19 percent in the West were greatly outnumbered by 50 percent in the East.” Ibid. 154-155.

⁵⁴⁹ See Henning, 53-60.

⁵⁵⁰ Henning, 61-62.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid. 69-78.

revolutionary, then as a carrier of revolutionary principles within the bourgeois epoch.⁵⁵² Wartime Marxist interpretations such as Georg Lukács' 1941 *Faust-Studien* had laid the groundwork for a more sophisticated economic take on *Faust's* narrative trajectory and for Brechtian discussions of “Verfremdung.”⁵⁵³ Johannes Becher criticized Lukács for treating “Weimar classicism as nothing but an intermezzo, a fatal reaction to the French Revolution that had propelled German poets’ and thinkers’ flight into inwardness and accelerated their turning away from politics.”⁵⁵⁴ He instead portrayed Goethe as a liberator.⁵⁵⁵

In August 1949, the same year Eisler composed the East German national hymn, a celebration of Goethe’s 200th birth anniversary took place in Weimar. In October of that year, the German Democratic Republic was officially founded; with the title “Goethe-Festtage der deutschen Nation,” the Goethe festival secured the poet’s role in service of the “true,” anti-fascist Germany. Thomas Mann received Weimar’s Goethe Prize in tandem with the August celebration, ten years after publishing his critique of Goethe’s Nazi-era appropriation, *Lotte in Weimar*, and took West German criticism as a result of accepting such an award from the GDR.⁵⁵⁶ Tensions were running high between the fracturing Germanies, less than a year after the Soviet blockade, Allied airlifts, and September 1948 pro-West and pro-Communist demonstrations in Berlin. The presence of tanks and tens of thousands of soldiers, on both sides,

⁵⁵² Buck, 497.

⁵⁵³ Ibid. 496. See also Georg Lukács, *Faust-Studien*, in *Werke*, Vol. 6 (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1965).

⁵⁵⁴ Lepenies, 161.

⁵⁵⁵ Buck, 497.

⁵⁵⁶ Wißmann, 176.

led to the bomb-devastated city's ongoing reputation as a "Frontstadt"⁵⁵⁷ ("front-line city"). Goethe's Weimar, co-opted by Hitler as a public relations staging point, had been bombed as well, and its proximity to Buchenwald became a painful reference-point for atrocities committed in the name of German racial and cultural "superiority." Goethe's famous oak tree had been left standing when the forest was cleared for the concentration camp but was burned in a bombing raid in 1944. The Weimar citizens' walk past piles of corpses and camp survivors in April 1945 is well known, as is their common claim not to have known what that happened on that hilltop site. At the time of the Goethe festival four years later, efforts to voice hope for a new, anti-fascist Germany overshadowed the potential for collective guilt, easier to assign to West Germany at the time, as well as a sense of mourning, though this did find voice in the form of commemorative music such as Paul Dessau's 1948-51 *Drei Grabschriften*, which memorializes Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, along with Lenin.⁵⁵⁸ The task of reclaiming a German "giant" in the name of hope seemed urgent.

In May 1949, Ottmar Gerster, director of the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Weimar, conveyed to Hanns Eisler the festival committee's request for a musical work, with only four months in which to complete it.⁵⁵⁹ Eisler received his formal commission in July, with specific instructions to compose songs set to Goethe texts for orchestra; despite the time pressure, Eisler had already chosen texts from *Faust II* that he felt had a celebratory, "volkstümlichen Charakter,"⁵⁶⁰ his use of the word for "popular," marking another act of reclamation: in the

⁵⁵⁷ Thomas Flemming, *Berlin in the Cold War: The Battle for the Divided City* (Berlin: edition q im be.bra, 2009), 27.

⁵⁵⁸ See Sprigge, 32-33.

⁵⁵⁹ Pistiak, 18.

⁵⁶⁰ Hanns Eisler, letter to Ottmar Gerster, 31 May 1949, cited in *Ibid.* 18-19.

German Democratic Republic, “Volk” came to signify united workers and comrades, in opposition to the “blood and soil” folk tradition inherited from Herder and taken up by Nazi propaganda. Throughout his life, Eisler was well aware of Goethe’s longstanding bourgeois appeal, though he always looked for political common ground, for example in the treatment of the French Revolution in *Hermann und Dorothea* in relation to his own aesthetic responses to the First World War.⁵⁶¹ He also admitted, in his late interviews with Hans Bunge, to a love for Goethe simply “[w]egen der Schönheit”⁵⁶² [“due to beauty”]. His early-GDR settings of the poet speak as much to this aesthetic pleasure as they do to political appropriation of classic texts.

A multivalent *Rhapsodie*

Eisler’s use of the word “volkstümlich” is puzzling in light of the Goethe text he chose to set: a passage from the complex second part of *Faust*, with all its strands of Greek mythology, Christian iconography, and Italian carnival. In his refunctioned text, Eisler teased out fragments from Act III, including lines spoken by Phorkyas (Mephistopheles in female disguise) announcing the old gods’ obsolescence and a choral text from the lament on Euphorion’s death. In addition to the sheer difficulty of the text as a whole, these passages’ voicing by a deceptive messenger and by women mourning Faust and Helen’s son, who has plunged Icarus-like to his death, complicate Eisler’s ostensibly celebratory project. Arnold Pistiak attributes this choice to a modern conception of Mephistopheles, in which he is not merely a demonic character but rather a complex, contradictory figure that “eröffnet dem reflektierenden Hörer zugleich die Möglichkeit, die Goethesche Formulierung, eurer Götter alt Gemenge’ vielfältig und

⁵⁶¹ Bunge, 116.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

hintergründig auszudeuten”⁵⁶³ [“likewise opens to the reflective hearer the possibility of interpreting the Goethean formulation ‘the old tumult of your Gods’ in a multifaceted and subtle way”]. In his recent treatment of Eisler’s Goethe settings of this period, however, Pistiak still insists that the composer’s musical language of the early 1950s takes an attitude of the “Direkt-Bekennnishaften, des Nicht-Verfremdenden, Nicht-Distanzierenden, Identifizierenden”⁵⁶⁴ [“directly-confessional, non-estranged, non-distanced, identifying”]. My readings will show that the multilayered subtlety of Goethe’s texts does in fact emerge in Eisler’s music, which in turn plays on this very multiplicity to critical and reflective effect. Just as his East German national hymn is embedded with parodic friction, Eisler’s *Goethe-Rhapsodie* undermines its own potential for empathic identification. How its polyphonic complexity resists the tendency to fetishize a new East German state will become apparent in my musical analysis; some background on *Faust II* sheds light on Eisler’s choice and musical setting of the text.

Goethe completed the second part of *Faust* over a twenty-year period at the end of his life; it was published several months after his death in Weimar in 1832. This “closet drama,” meant to be read aloud in small groups rather than performed onstage, draws on eighteenth-century *Faust* models that include the figure of the Emperor and a marriage to Helen, though Goethe expanded significantly on these additions to the older legend. The project’s wide-ranging geography – from the imperial court to the chthonic “realm of the Mothers,” from a German-Greek Walpurgisnacht to a Florentine carnival, and from an anchorites’ desert to a Dante-inflected Heaven – can be seen as a staging of Goethe’s own broad intellectual explorations, or as a form of synthesis at the end of his long life. Like much of Goethe’s work, from his narrative

⁵⁶³ Pistiak, 24.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid. 56.

ballads to his prose investigation of botanical growth, *Faust II* unfolds in a progressive, organic way, despite its dramatically varied settings. The play's allegorical links (e.g. between paper money and allegorical poetry itself⁵⁶⁵), asynchronous characters (Dante himself appears in the carnival scene, along with antique/allegorical figures), and religious implications (is Faust's redemption justified?) have long been subjects of study and debate. *Faust's* rich afterlife as adaptation and parody shows its potential for a wide range of interpretation. Contemporary *Faust II* studies have emphasized its economic and magical aspects, sometimes in tandem,⁵⁶⁶ as well as the text's concern with modernity in its acceleration, colonization, and culture of crisis.⁵⁶⁷ The political aspects of *Faust II* are sometimes explicit, as, for example, in Faust's attempt to please the pleasure-loving Emperor; in the satire on post-French Revolution currency, in the form of paper money, offered to the Emperor by Mephistopheles; and in Faust's disastrous land-reclamation project. Problems of gender in *Faust II*, from the chthonic mother-realm to the idealization of "ewige Weiblichkeit" [the "Eternal Feminine"] also carry political implications⁵⁶⁸ for Eisler's setting for soprano voice. Overall *Faust II* critiques corrupted power; it depicts the Emperor (or Holy Roman Empire) as materialistic and hedonistic, and Faust as destructively ambitious once he gains political favor. In this sense, the work as a whole aligns with Eisler's effort to speak to the formation of a new state disavowing not only past state-sanctioned violence

⁵⁶⁵Hansjakob Werlen, "The Universal and the Particular," in David Wellbery, ed., *A New History of German Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 417.

⁵⁶⁶ See Hans Christoph Binswanger, *Geld und Magie. Eine ökonomische Deutung von Goethes Faust* (Hamburg: Murmann Verlag, Fourth Edition, 2010), and John Gearey, *Goethe's Other Faust: The Drama, Part II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

⁵⁶⁷ See Michael Jaeger, *Goethes kritische Phänomenologie der Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004).

⁵⁶⁸ See G. K. Hart, "Errant strivings: Goethe, *Faust*, and the feminist reader," in M. Orr and L. Sharpe, eds., *From Goethe to Gide: Feminism, Aesthetics and the French and German Literary Canon, 1770-1936* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005), 7-12.

but also capitalist inequality and exploitation. The particular text he chose announces the passing of old gods, also in line with this political stance, though its dramatic context and voicing of lament complicate the project. Overall, his settings highlight the collage-like, non-linear aspect of *Faust II*, despite its poet's reputation for organic unfolding in language and thought.

Eisler's excerpts from Act III begin after a long passage spoken by the female Chorus, responding to Phorkyas' prophecy about the young Euphorion/Poetry with a warning, in which they recount the story of Hermes. Goethe's stage notes between this passage and Phorkyas' lines read as follows:

*Ein reizendes, reinmelodisches Saitenspiel erklingt aus der Höhle. Alle merken auf und scheinen bald innig gerührt. Von hier an bis zur bemerkten Pause durchaus mit vollstimmiger Musik.*⁵⁶⁹

[*Graceful, purely melodic string music sounds from the cavern. All take notice and soon appear deeply moved. From here until the pause noted after, rich music throughout.*]

The music signals a transition, as Phorkyas begins her/his lines with one Eisler left out: "Höret allerliebste Klänge"⁵⁷⁰ ["Hear the beloved sounds"]. Writing his own Goethe-music not long after his exile songs mourning poisoned art forms under Hitler, Eisler may have wanted some distance from the nineteenth-century "schöne Klang"⁵⁷¹ ["beautiful sound"] he had problematized in his Schumannian settings of Hölderlin. At the same time, his *Rhapsodie* takes on its own, more cinematic form of lyricism. He decontextualizes Phorkyas' lines, meant caustically in the play to discount the Chorus' fully justified warning, and treats them

⁵⁶⁹ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust: Texte*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Albrecht Schöne, Vol. 7/1 (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1999), 375.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ Ernst Bloch and Hanns Eisler, "Die Kunst zu Erben," in Hans-Jürgen Schmitt, ed., *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 260.

pedagogically instead.⁵⁷² A close reading of Eisler's musical setting will test how much of the text's troubling ambiguity remains. Phorkyas' words, excerpted and fragmented to speak to a new epoch, read as follows:

Macht euch schnell von Fabeln frei,
Eurer Götter alt Gemenge
Laßt es hin, es ist vorbei.⁵⁷³

[Free yourselves from the old fables,
The old tumult of your gods,
Let it go, it's over now.]

This passage also reveals Goethe's own sense that the Greek "ideal had now become historical and was no longer absolute" in the modern era.⁵⁷⁴ What remains after such a break? John Gearey suggests that "when Mephistopheles/Phorkyas casts aside myth and fable, not only are the illusions and superstitions of the past rejected but form itself is threatened. There is nothing on which to hang experience."⁵⁷⁵ This demonic effort to "reduce the world to the chaos from which it was created"⁵⁷⁶ has two sides: ruin and renewal. Eisler's choice to take up this text echoes his cutting of Hölderlin's lines referring to Greek antiquity in a salvific light and also speaks to the state of Germany in 1949, in its chaotic transition from rubble to reconstruction.

After Phorkyas' speech, Euphorion himself appears. It is his "purely melodic" music that has provided the background to the entire scene to this point; the music continues quasi-diegetically, as if expanding from a porous body into the dramatic space. If the play was intended

⁵⁷² Pistiak, 23-24.

⁵⁷³ Goethe, *Faust*, 375.

⁵⁷⁴ John Gearey, *Goethe's Other Faust: The Drama, Part II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 109.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 134.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

to be read aloud rather than performed, this is also imaginary music, a ghostly, associative sonic play in the listeners' heads. It continues even as Euphorion enacts the death-leap in his ribboned, wing-like clothing as described earlier by the disguised Mephistopheles, despite further warnings from his parents Faust and Helena and the Chorus. That Eisler chose his next excerpt from the Chorus' lament on the death of Poetry indicates a continuing sense of loss, despite the turn toward hope at this point in the text:

Wem gelingt es [höchste Sinnen, reinen Mut]? – Trübe Frage,
Der das Schicksal sich verummmt,
Wenn am unglücklichsten Tage
Blutend alles Volk verstummt.
Doch erfrischt neue Lieder,
Steht nicht länger tief gebeugt;
Denn der Boden zeugt sie wieder,
Wie von je er sie gezeugt.⁵⁷⁷

[Who managed it (highest sense, pure courage)? – a dark question,
wrapped in disguise by Fate,
through days unblest by fortune,
the people's blood silently boils.
Yet new songs refresh them,
no need to remain bowed down;
Soon enough the ground will meet them
As it birthed them once before.]

Goethe follows this classically metered passage, musical in itself, with a note for the stage music to stop.⁵⁷⁸ It is as if Euphorion's death, or the silencing of Poetry, is not complete until it has been mourned. Pistiak holds that despite this passage's apocalyptic sense, reaching from Goethe's time to the twentieth century's horrors, "Hoffnung existiert aber dennoch"⁵⁷⁹ ["yet hope exists"]. The text's three-part movement from collective rage to hope and then to death

⁵⁷⁷ Goethe, *Faust*, 384.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁹ Pistiak, 26.

keeps this opposition active, however. It also leads back to the chaotic or chthonic realm of the Mothers, which appears to have been a last-minute addition to the play that nevertheless underpins its expansive, future- and heaven-driven movement.⁵⁸⁰ For all his effort to choose simple, folk-like text to celebrate both Goethe and the new East German state, Eisler set himself yet another formal and at the same time dialectical challenge. A repeated “doch erfrischt neue Lieder” to the end of the Chorus’ passage⁵⁸¹ keeps this tension between opposites in play.

This kind of binary tension occurs within a larger dynamic of formal parody and polyphony. On first hearing, the twelve-minute *Goethe-Rhapsodie* sounds like a collage of Kampfmusik, film-score lyricism, Viennese echoes of Mahler and Richard Strauss, pentatonic melody, operatic vocal scoring, and spiky keyboard irruptions. Unlike Beethoven’s organic variation based on small musical cells, which Thomas Pfau has related to Goethe’s study of plant growth and Aristotelean entelechy,⁵⁸² Eisler’s *Rhapsodie* does not extend its material but rather conveys a sense of montage and simultaneity, even as a temporal scoring of different voices, moods, and styles. Interruption and refrain also undermine the possibility of “progress.” This work of “parodierender Variation”⁵⁸³ [“parodying variation”] moves from a rumbling, percussive orchestral introduction (marked, in dialectical fashion from the outset, “ruhig”⁵⁸⁴ or “peaceful”) to a glowing soprano solo interrupted by the piano, from there to a stylistically

⁵⁸⁰ See Gearey, 80-81.

⁵⁸¹ Hanns Eisler, *Rhapsodie für großes Orchester (mit Sopran-Solo nach Worten aus Goethes Faust II)* (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1967), 14.

⁵⁸² See Thomas Pfau, “All is Leaf: Difference, Metamorphosis, and Goethe’s Phenomenology of Knowledge,” in *Studies in Romanticism*, Spring 2010, Vol. 49, 1, 3-49.

⁵⁸³ Hans Joachim Kreutzer, *Faust: Mythos und Musik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2003), 152.

⁵⁸⁴ Eisler, *Rhapsodie*, 1.

variable orchestral interlude, and finally to the soprano's refrain, repeating the "Doch erfrischt neue Lieder"⁵⁸⁵ text. As Eisler editor Peter Deeg has noted, the work cites its own composer in large swaths of the orchestral writing, in almost identical passages from the 1948 Czech film *Křížová trojka*.⁵⁸⁶ Eisler scholars have also noted a lament-motif related to music in the 1943 noir film *Hangmen Also Die*, a Brecht-Fritz Lang project that depicts the death of a Czech resistance fighter, a motif also related to music in Brecht's *Die Mutter*, whose early musical sketches by Eisler confirm the connection. Pistiak's suggestion that Eisler may also have reached to Mozart's G-minor string quartet (*Adagio ma non troppo*) and Peter Kreuder's "Good-bye Johnny" from 1939,⁵⁸⁷ more obviously alluded to in "Auferstanden aus Ruinen," raises a similar question to that discussed in Chapter 2, regarding the possible "Stormy Weather" citation in Eisler's final Hölderlin fragment: how suggestive, on the one hand, or literal, on the other, are such musical-intertextual references? Most important to Pistiak is Eisler's transformation of existing musical material into a new context, wherever it falls on this spectrum of quotation. Here the anti-fascist *Hangmen Also Die* motif is now taken up to honor the "roten Fahne" ["red (Communist) banner"].⁵⁸⁸ The result is a layering of past music into the present, amplifying the *Rhapsodie*'s non-linear swirl. As it packs into one musical work the various and already complex

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid. 69-70.

⁵⁸⁶ Peter Deeg, "Selten gesehene Eisler-Filme," in *Eisler-Mitteilungen* 16, ed. Internationalien Hanns Eisler Gesellschaft, commissioned by the Hanns and Steffy Eisler Foundation, April 2009, 47.

⁵⁸⁷ Pistiak, 26-30. Eisler was later accused of plagiarizing the Kreuder song, from the film *Wasser für Canitoga*, in the "Auferstanden aus Ruinen" hymn. See Wißmann, 180. The most serious concern among East Berlin officials appears to have been Eisler's use of a capitalist, Hollywood melody ("damit muß die DDR für ihre Hymne zahlen" ["so the GDR must pay for its hymn"]), Archiv der Behörde des Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), Büro der Leitung, Nr. 117 Band 2, MfS HAXX, Sign. 10144, Bericht 231.

⁵⁸⁸ Pistiak, 30.

voices in Goethe's text, the work absorbs yet another historical layer. Eisler's time limit certainly played a role in his citing of his own and others' music, though this is a common compositional practice; paradoxically the composer's rush resulted in a stranger, richer piece of music than the more explicitly polyphonic work he had originally conceived, for mezzo-soprano and baritone solo, boys' choir, mixed choir, and orchestra.⁵⁸⁹

Eisler's ultimate choice of a soprano solo links the voice closely to Goethe's two excerpted texts, the first spoken by the "female" Phorkyas (Mephistopheles in gender-flexible disguise) and the second sung by the female Chorus. That these two passages are antithetical, in the sense of provocation and mourning, gives the singer a dialectical role not present in the source text, as she embodies and synthesizes these differing perspectives. Her physically single voice becomes polyvocal, as she utters words by an already doubled character and by the plural Chorus. As noted earlier, this polyphony within one voice is typical of Eisler's Goethe settings, recalling Thomas Mann's composite Leverkühn in *Doktor Faustus* but adding gender ambiguity as well, within the larger polyphonic texture of the orchestral-voice setting. In this case, the soprano's operatic scoring amid cinematic orchestral movement gives her a doubly iconic role, too: as the ingénue diva and the screen star, both coded as redemptive, not least thanks to the "ideal feminine" long permeating cultural iconography in Europe, in its varied forms from Dante to Goethe and beyond. As David Wellbery has pointed out, not only this gendered ideal but also the "lyric myth of the transcendental voice" was at the heart of Goethe's poetic projects, rooted

⁵⁸⁹ Hanns Eisler, letter to Ernst Fischer, 3 July 1949, in *Hanns Eisler Gesamtausgabe*, Series IX, Schriften, Vol *Hanns Eisler: Briefe 1944-1951*, ed. Maren Köster and Jürgen Schebera (Wiesbaden and Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2013), 139. Fritz Hennenberg claims that Eisler originally planned to write a four-part cantata, though Arnold Pistiak notes that this claim has not been substantiated (Pistiak, 85).

in the “late-eighteenth-century valorization of voice” as a generator of subjectivity.⁵⁹⁰ Had Eisler scored this work for mezzo-soprano or alto, a darker, more ambiguous timbre would have marked the music, as is the case in his *Das Vorbild* to be discussed below. Despite the *Rhapsodie*-soprano’s timbre signaling a received gender trope, however, too many other voices are embedded in her words to give them straightforward political authority. This singer allows for “the transgressive, risk-taking potential” of what Elizabeth Wood calls “Sapphonic voices” with their flexible, changing registers, or what Carolyn Abbate has noted in opera as “noisy sources of resonance,” voices that “can in some sense usurp the authorial voice.”⁵⁹¹

The orchestral introduction, with its minor sonority, heavy percussion, and jumpy woodwind lines, belies the ostensibly hopeful vocal line to come. It reflects Eisler’s intentional creation of a “düstere Stimmung” [“somber mood”] evoking postwar ruin (“eine Art Klangprotokoll von zertrümmerten Häusern und zertrümmerten Menschen”⁵⁹² [“a kind of sound-report of wrecked houses and wrecked people”]); nonetheless, it ends with a gentle string passage and hunting-horn allusion in thirds. The soprano enters on a high F marked “Frisch”⁵⁹³ [“fresh”], evoking brightness in this head-voice range, over a fortissimo tone cluster that includes a dissonant tritone (E, D, F, and B-natural), another contrast between bright and dark.

⁵⁹⁰ See David Wellbery, *The Specular Moment: Goethe’s Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 206, 194-198.

⁵⁹¹ Laura Wahlfors, “Resonances and Dissonances: Listening to Waltraud Meier’s Envoicing of Isolde,” in Berhart and Kramer, eds., *On Voice* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014), 69. See also Carolyn Abbate, “Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women,” in Ruth A. Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 225-258, and Elizabeth Wood, “Sapphonic,” in Philip Brett et al., eds., *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 27-66.

⁵⁹² Hanns Eisler, radio interview concluding with *Rhapsodie* broadcast, 27 August 1949. Hanns Eisler Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

⁵⁹³ Eisler, *Rhapsodie*, 8.

Fig. 3.2

The image shows a page of a musical score with six staves. From top to bottom, the staves are labeled: Horn, Gesang, Violine 1 and 2, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The Horn part has a first ending bracket. The Gesang part is marked 'Soprano Solo' and has the lyrics 'Macht euch schnell von Fabeln frei'. The Violine 1 and 2 parts have a 'poco rit.' marking. The Viola, Cello, and Bass parts have a 'più mosso Allegretto Moderato' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

The singer's "Macht euch schnell von Fabeln frei" ["Free yourselves from the old fables"] vocal line alternates between steady syllabic pacing and aria-like melisma (phrases in which one syllable is stretched over several notes). The melody rises repeatedly to a high G, reinforcing this operatic quality. Gerd Rienäcker refers to this passage as a "verzweifelt-beschwörendem Ausruf"⁵⁹⁴ ["desperate-imploring exclamation"]; harmonically it works as a minor-major tug-of-war, until G major wins out at the end of the passage ("es ist vorbei"⁵⁹⁵ ["it is over"]), followed by running pizzicati in the strings. This playful cinematic passage is interrupted by a triple-

⁵⁹⁴ Gerd Rienäcker, "Vorbilder – Landkarten – Maximen? Über Schwierigkeiten, aufs Neue zu Beginnen," in *Hanns Eisler. 's müßt dem Himmel Höllenangst werden*, ed. Maren Köster (Berlin and Hofheim am Taunus: Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, 1998), 18.

⁵⁹⁵ Eisler, *Rhapsodie*, 9.

that alludes associatively to both ancient Greece and to some European folk-music idioms. The keyboard's percussive sonority, exposed over silence in the rest of the orchestra until a harp glissando (also descending) sets up the soprano's next entrance, creates a textural as well as musical-textual interruption. **Fig. 3.3**

The image shows a page of a musical score with seven staves. From top to bottom, the staves are labeled: Klavier (Piano), Harfe (Harp), Gesang (Singer), Violine 1 (Violin I), Violine 2 (Violin II), Viola, and Cello/Bass. The Klavier staff has a 'Solo' annotation. The Harfe staff has a 'Gliss.' annotation with a downward arrow. The Gesang staff has a 'Sopran-Solo' annotation. The Cello/Bass staff has 'pizz.' annotations. The score is in a common time signature and features various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

As in his Hölderlin settings, Eisler draws on the charisma of familiar musical material – in this case film-music jauntiness – only to break it.

The singer's next passage, based on the end of the Chorus' lament in *Faust II*, takes on a decidedly folksong-like character. This is the melody Pistiak links to Eisler's *Hangmen Also Die* mourning-motif and other sources;⁵⁹⁶ if this is the case, Eisler re-functions the music in a brighter tonal light. Beginning with a cheerful half-step slide on "Wem gelingt es,"⁵⁹⁷ the melody is firmly located in F-major and progresses as a predictable strophic verse. Minimal orchestral scoring, a "dolcissimo" horn melody, and "grazioso" runs for violin and flute⁵⁹⁸ convey a

⁵⁹⁶ See Pistiak, 26-30.

⁵⁹⁷ Eisler, *Rhapsodie*, 10.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid. 12-13.

“Stimmung” of well-being – until the piano interrupts again, after the singer’s repetition of “doch erfrischt neue Lieder” (in a pentatonic melody,⁵⁹⁹ itself an interruption), this time more lightly. The piano’s broken chords are both rising and falling, yet another case of musical-dialectical tension, with four unison descending lines in thirds rising from G to C. Combined with pizzicati in the strings, this textural change works once again as a “break” in cinematic flow. The singer completes her passage with a repetition of “steht nicht länger tief gebeugt, steht nicht länger tief gebeugt”⁶⁰⁰ [“no need to remain bowed down, no need to remain bowed down”], rising and landing on an unstable cadence. Though not strictly a “halb Schluß”⁶⁰¹ [half cadence], the conclusion to this section is very much in line with Eisler’s preferred mode of leaving the last word open to interpretation and critique. The final melodic phrase is itself unstable, partly adhering to the folksong-like F major established earlier and partly recalling the pentatonic “doch erfrischt” line, in harmonic simultaneity. The cello and bass line under the singer’s last “tief gebeugt” ends on an A-flat, darkening the F-major tone-field to F minor. The singer leaves F major in this last bar as well, landing from high F to D, a dissonant tritone in relation to A-flat. All is not as straightforwardly cheerful as the folksong-verse has led the listener to believe.

The orchestral interlude following this vocal section is marked “schwungvoll, brilliant”⁶⁰² [“spirited, brilliant”] and begins with racing runs doubled in the strings and winds. Goethe’s

⁵⁹⁹ Arnold Pistiak suggests a link between this pentatonic passage and Eisler’s valorization, like Brecht’s, of Mao Tse-Tung. See Pistiak, 31. A broader reference to Chinese Taoist thought, also important in Brecht’s work, may be the case here.

⁶⁰⁰ Eisler, *Rhapsodie*, 15.

⁶⁰¹ See Fritz Hennenberg, “Zur Dialektik des Schließens in Liedern von Hanns Eisler,” in *Sammelbände zur Musikgeschichte der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, Vol. II, ed. Heinz Alfred Brockhaus and Konrad Niemann (Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1971).

⁶⁰² Eisler, *Rhapsodie*, 16.

“scoring” of *Faust II*, Act III with diegetic music throughout the spoken passages may have influenced Eisler’s decision to intertwine orchestral voices with that of the already “polyphonic” soprano. The piano punctuates the interlude’s opening passage with stark octaves and quick chords, while the horns move down the scale in a melody of loud, accented thirds. A percussive section follows, with “*marcato*” sixteenth notes in the strings⁶⁰³ underlying spiky flute runs, again recalling Eisler’s *Kampfmusik* and brittle film scoring for city scenes. A decidedly pentatonic passage interrupts, highlighting piano, xylophone, and harp, a trope referencing Asian music with possible allusion to Brecht’s engagement with Chinese theater and Taoist thought. After this abrupt change in tonality and texture, a Mahlerian passage takes over, with a “*dolce*” horn melody⁶⁰⁴ picked up in the strings and winds. This section quickly disintegrates into loud running triplets in the winds over marchlike eighth notes in the strings; here Eisler embeds a miniature “step of sorrow” *passacaglia* in the cello and bass line, recalling both his nationalist-parodic Heine choruses and his exile songs. **Fig. 3.4**



As if in another musical tug-of-war, the horns re-enter in a traditional hunting-horn passage in harmonic thirds, over Viennese lilt in the strings, evoking both Richard Strauss and Mahler – in

⁶⁰³ Ibid. 18.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid. 26-27.

Strauss' case, as cynical exploitation of beauty that wins out in its beauty anyway;⁶⁰⁵ and in Mahler's, as citation in montage form that exposes the reification of such tropes.⁶⁰⁶ Throughout this section, major and minor pull against each other, Eisler's harmonic dialectics still at work within the larger polyphonic framework, with a short citation of the soprano's folksong-like melody. Another frenetic, percussive section follows, in which the strings seem to set up a Johann Strauss-style waltz, followed by another Viennese passage, interrupted by heavy timpani and brass. Percussive drive and swaying lyricism are clearly as much in contrast throughout the *Rhapsodie* as are major and minor tone fields. After this interruption, Eisler's frenetic scoring becomes playful again, echoing the earlier film music-style passage that introduced the singer's "Wem gelingt es" melody. A jaunty clarinet solo, again over lilting strings, is picked up by the flute and echoed by a slightly mournful violin. An ascending harp glissando swings the music back into brassy, percussive urgency, with an annunciatory, still Mahlerian, passage in the horns. Tension builds, sometimes broken by major-minor runs in the upper voices, and is finally released in a crash of cymbals. The singer's pentatonic melody is then suggested in the violin and piccolo's upper registers, with harp harmonics adding to this ethereal quality, as the strings enter in a gradual stacking of pianissimo trills. The singer enters one last time to complete the *Rhapsodie*, repeating "doch erfrischt neue Lieder,/ steht nicht länger tief gebeugt."⁶⁰⁷ Once again, the piano interrupts with loud, descending broken chords. The vocal line ends with the same open-ended, minor-inflected third as before, but this time Eisler gives F major the last word, in sudden, fortissimo final octaves. Difficult to hear but present in the score is one last

⁶⁰⁵ Bryan Gilliam, seminar on Strauss' operas, Duke University, spring 2013.

⁶⁰⁶ Carsten Schmidt, words and music seminar, Sarah Lawrence College, spring 1999. See also Fredric Jameson on the Brechtian use of reification, in *Brecht and Method* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), 169.

⁶⁰⁷ Eisler, *Rhapsodie*, 69-70.

dialectical move, however; at the same time as the strings' definitive major-key ending, the horns, trumpets, and trombone complicate the tone-field with C and G major sonorities.

Fig. 3.5

The image shows a page of a musical score for 'Goethe-Rhapsodie'. At the top is a vocal line for 'Gesang' (Singer) with the lyrics: '- nicht län-ger tief er-beugt - steh' nicht län-ger tief er-beugt'. Below the vocal line are five staves for string instruments: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The string parts are marked 'arco' and feature long, sweeping melodic lines with various dynamics like 'pp' and 'p'. The score concludes with a 'Fine' marking at the end of the Bass staff.

Again and again, Eisler's *Goethe-Rhapsodie* sets up hopeful musical-associative expectations, from cinematic sweep to Viennese lilt, and undermines them with percussive irruption or minor sonority before they can completely entrance the listener. The result is a disorienting carnival of German cultural material, recycled, revoiced, and heteroglot. Though Eisler's engagement with Goethe could be read in terms of Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" and its revisionist responses,⁶⁰⁸ this model tends to suppress the dialogic play Eisler seems to be enjoying with his source material, as well as remaining limited to cross-textual rather than intermedial response. Gerd Rienäcker has noted that the apparent kaleidoscopic quality of this work, with all its overt or covert citations, may appear as a precursor of postmodernism but in fact retains the Marxist "*Verpflichtung zur Reflexion*" ["*duty of reflection*"] important to both Eisler and Adorno.⁶⁰⁹ Allowing for the actual closeness of "modern" and "postmodern" in

⁶⁰⁸ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁶⁰⁹ Gerd Rienäcker, "Eislers 'Goethe-Rhapsodie' – ein Vorläufer der Postmoderne?", manuscript,

montage/collage effects and self-referential play, the work does call its own wholeness into question. Furthering Rienäcker's point, I would argue that this very instability is what gives the work its reflective, critical capacity: like the Hölderlin songs, albeit in more carnivalesque form, the *Rhapsodie* invokes and revokes musical trance states, making the listener aware of them. It also draws attention to received musical gender tropes in its complication of the soprano voice, resisting the fetishization of voice as symbol. "Subjective" formal play supports Eisler's lifelong stance against musical narcosis and nationalist fixation, despite the anti-modernist position he sometimes felt the need to take.

Eisler was in fact more concerned about music that failed to function in the difficult space between aesthetic rigor and political responsibility. As Rienäcker has also noted, Eisler's suspicion of "Dummheit in der Musik" ["stupidity in music"] included "Bombast, Sentimentalität, Pseudohumanität und 'verlogene Optimismus'" ["bombast, sentimentality, pseudohumanity and 'false optimism'"], in addition to the use of twelve-tone technique and electronic music for their own sake.⁶¹⁰ Setting up and veering away from musical styles within the framework of the *Rhapsodie*, and refusing to let the music sound uncritically "optimistic," keeps this work from becoming mere entertainment/formalist experiment on that one hand or nationalist cheerleading on the other. Its carnivalesque, "low"/"high"-culture aspect naturally upsets dogma; as Bakhtin puts it, "in the atmosphere of joyful relativity characteristic of a carnival sense of the world ... there is a weakening of its one-sided rhetorical seriousness, its

cited in Pistiak, 22. Italics mine. Rienäcker has recently revised his essay to insist more clearly on the critical, reflective aspect of the work. Personal correspondence, Berlin, 23 January 2015. Thanks to Jørgen Bruhn for noting that postmodernism also takes a reflective stance, if not in the "duty"-bound form it does in Marxist-inflected art.

⁶¹⁰ Gerd Rienäcker, "Hanns Eisler über die Dummheit in der Musik," in *Brecht – Eisler – Marcuse 100: Fragen kritischer Theorie heute*. ed. Victor Rego Diaz, Kamil Uldag, and Gunter Willing (Berlin: Argument-Verlag, 1999), 42.

rationality, its singular meaning, its dogmatism.”⁶¹¹ In its less joyful moments, this music also serves the honest political function of mirroring a violently transitional time in German history. The project begs several questions: Is the old fascist order really over or “vorbei,” as Phorkyas’ re-contextualized words indicate, in this new German state built out of ruins? Even if so, would this mean, to re-contextualize John Gearey’s suggestion as well, that “when Mephistopheles/Phorkyas casts aside myth and fable, not only are the illusions and superstitions of the past rejected but form itself is threatened”?⁶¹² Does the music indicate a brave new world or reflect the instability in its very foundation? Both positions hold true on close listening to the *Rhapsodie*. Its sense of hope is as fragile as it is genuine. In Bakhtin’s view of “the inner dialogism of the word” itself, this is music “filled with traces of earlier uses, anticipations of coming uses ... ambiguous, open, unstable, changing,”⁶¹³ in fact more appropriate for a new national beginning than Party officials might have wished.

As for Eisler’s wish to write something “volkstümlich” in character, the *Rhapsodie* was followed by a collaboration with Johannes Becher, *Neuen Deutschen Volkslieder*. While even more explicitly folksong-like than the strophic soprano passages in the *Rhapsodie*, even this collection reflects Eisler’s suspicion of “platte Volkstümlichkeit” [“banal folksiness”] in an attempt to find a fresh but not commonplace language even for inexperienced musicians.⁶¹⁴ In his 1958 rehearsal interview “Über die Dummheit in der Musik,” Eisler comments that “[manche

⁶¹¹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Kindle locations 3015-3017.

⁶¹² Gearey, 134.

⁶¹³ Jørgen Bruhn and Jan Lundquist, eds. *The Novelness of Bakhtin* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2001), 34.

⁶¹⁴ Wißmann, 181. See also Hanns Eisler, “Über die Dummheit in der Musik,” in Hanns Eisler, *Gesammelte Werke*, Series 3, Vol. 2, *Musik und Politik: Schriften 1948-1962*, ed. Günter Mayer (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1982), 388-402.

meiner Freunde glauben, daß die volksfremde Dekadenz die gefährlichste ist. Ich halte die volksnahe Dekadenz für gefährlicher”⁶¹⁵ [“some of my friends believe that folk-aloof decadence is the most dangerous. I consider folk-ish decadence the most dangerous”]. The enjoyment of music, whether modernist or folk-based, was itself in question in the wake of the 1930s formalism debate, and in the early German Democratic Republic. The question was not whether the music itself afforded pleasure but whether that pleasure was ideologically legitimate, and whether it could fulfill its critical function “in Verbindung mit politisch aufklärenden Texten oder Darstellungen”⁶¹⁶ [“in connection with politically enlightening texts or representations”]. For Eisler, the chief question was whether musical enjoyment also allowed for contradiction. As he had noted earlier in his American *Composing for the Films* project with Adorno,

A piece full of dissonances can be fundamentally conventional, while one based on comparatively simpler material can be absolutely novel if these resources are used according to the constructive requirements of the piece instead of the institutionalized flow of musical language. Even a sequence of triads can be unusual and striking when it does not follow the accustomed rut and is conceived only with regard to its specific meaning.⁶¹⁷

Eisler’s kaleidoscopic setting of passages from *Faust II* encounters this already rich and multivalent material anew; the *Rhapsodie* is as paradoxically faithful as it is fragmentary, as is the case in Eisler’s earlier Hölderlin songs. By taking up ostensibly simple but contextually multilayered language in his excerpts, and by further complicating the play’s already unstable gender tropes, Eisler pays far more tribute to the poet himself than to his use as a nationalist symbol. His music engages with *Faust II* in playful dialogue rather than placing it on a pedestal.

⁶¹⁵ Eisler, “Über die Dummheit in der Musik,” 390.

⁶¹⁶ See Károly Csipák, *Probleme der Volkstümlichkeit bei Hanns Eisler* (Munich: Musikverlag Emil Katzwichler, 1975), 165, 219.

⁶¹⁷ Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno, *Composing for the Films* (London and New York: Continuum, 2007), 21-22.

Critical play with Goethe and Bach

In the early 1950s, Eisler was at once lionized for his alignment with the values of the new East German state and defamed in the West for “giving in” to this state’s separatist ideology,⁶¹⁸ though, as noted earlier, the German Democratic Republic was founded partly on the hope for a united Socialist Germany. Eisler became involved in the GDR’s efforts to reclaim classical music and literature for everyone.⁶¹⁹ In the West, Theodor Adorno continued to warn about the ever-present danger of barbarity in the common valuation of cultural material; he and Eisler did agree on the moral stakes in art, not least in Eisler’s ever-present awareness – even in his 1950 folksong project – of the danger of aesthetic placation.⁶²⁰ Though the pedagogical aspect of postwar work by Hanns Eisler, Paul Dessau, Kurt Schwaen, and other East German composers may seem heavy-handed today, nuanced forms of “*Verfremdung*” appear as well. From Eisler’s discomfitingly catchy parodies, calling attention to the capitalist sway of popular music, to Schwaen’s syllabic dislocation in Lieder meant to estrange the bourgeois Liederabend tradition,⁶²¹ composers who had suffered censorship, imprisonment (in the case of Schwaen), and exile under Nazi rule managed to continue working against aesthetic-political rigidity. Eisler was eventually forced to pay a price for this. Before his *Faustus* libretto raised the ire of cultural-political powers in East Berlin, however, he drew on Goethe for an equally controversial work his time limit in 1949 had not allowed: a 1951/52 cantata written for his students, which

⁶¹⁸ Wißmann, 172-180.

⁶¹⁹ For a thorough treatment of such efforts, see Kyle Frackman and Larson Powell, eds., *Classical Music in the German Democratic Republic* (New York: Camden House, 2015).

⁶²⁰ Ibid. 183.

⁶²¹ See Heidi Hart, “Text Out of Step: Syllabic Dislocation and *Verfremdung* in the Songs of Kurt Schwaen,” conference paper, NeMLA, Harrisburg, PA, April 2014.

“versucht zu zeigen, wie man hohe Kunstfertigkeit mit einfachen Mitteln erzielen kann”⁶²²
[“attempts to show how one can achieve artistry by simple means”]. Eisler had drawn on Bach’s model to compose secular music to texts by Brecht as early as 1930 and during their joint exile. He typically worked in loose twelve-tone form within a Baroque framework of cantata, fugue, *cantus firmus*, and other conventions, with some direct formal parody of Bach.⁶²³ While this postwar project attempts greater simplicity, its traces of Schoenbergian atonality and serialism, along with Bachian tropes and citations, attest to the ongoing tension between formal play and political directness in Eisler’s oeuvre.

Das Vorbild [*The Example*], for alto voice and orchestra, was first titled *Über den Frieden. Triptychon* [*On Peace. A Triptych*]. Eisler had planned to incorporate texts by Brecht, Neruda, and Goethe⁶²⁴ but ultimately chose only Goethe’s “Das Göttliche” and “Symbolum.” Writing to Brecht in 1951, he explained his musical reasons for leaving out his friend’s “Friedenslied,” which would become iconic in the German Democratic Republic. Eisler also noted that *Das Vorbild*’s shift from an explicit emphasis on peace to a celebration of human reason hinged on the first line of “Das Göttliche”: “‘Edel sei der Mensch, hilfreich und gut.’ Das

⁶²² Hanns Eisler, program notes for the 11 October 1959 performance of *Das Vorbild*, in Eisler, *Musik und Politik. Schriften 1948-1962*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Series 3, Vol. 2, ed. Günter Mayer (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1982), 448.

⁶²³ See Kyung-Boon Lee, *Musik und Literatur im Exil: Hanns Eislers dodekaphone Exilkantaten* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001). Among the Eisler-Brecht collaborations drawing on Bach’s monumental religious works, the controversial 1930 Lehrstück *Die Maßnahme* includes a formal parody of the *St. Matthew Passion*’s opening chorus. See also Albrecht Dümmling, “Eisler/Brecht oder Brecht/Eisler? Perspektiven, Formen und Grenzen ihrer Zusammenarbeit,” in *Brecht und seine Komponisten*, ed. Albrecht Riethmüller (Laaber, Germany: Laaber Verlag 2000), 96-97.

⁶²⁴ Pistiak, 34.

klings wieder beim Aufbau des Sozialismus!”⁶²⁵ [“‘Let man be noble, helpful and good.’ That resounds in the building up of Socialism!”]. This cantata is hardly a mere container for ideology, however. The complexity it draws from past art forms works beyond the musical-textual level, as well as in its interplay of voices. Retaining Eisler’s proposed triptych structure, *Das Vorbild* is a spatially imagined acoustic work. Its form on the page asks for simultaneous awareness of each “scene” at the left, center, or right. Likewise, the medieval triptych provided a visual experience of “aggregate” and “analogical thought units”⁶²⁶ to be experienced simultaneously, rather than as linear narrative. With a secularized version of this structure in mind, Arnold Pistiak calls Eisler’s work a “Lehrstück” or “teaching piece,” not in the strict Brechtian or class-struggle sense, but rather as a means of conveying “eine allgemein-menschliche Moral”⁶²⁷ [“a universal human moral”]. The music’s movement through time works in tension against this spatial form, though the analogical links within Goethe’s texts, as well as Eisler’s concrete references to Bach (perhaps as analogy to human-made order), invite a secular-contemplative response that layers past and present, human and symbolic, in simultaneous play.

The opening movement of Eisler’s *Das Vorbild* transforms the music of Bach, with the presence of Schoenberg never far in the distance. A pedagogue-composer himself, Bach carried important cultural meaning in the new East German state, having spent most of his career in Saxony. Reclaiming his music on secular terms became the task not only of Eisler but also of state-supported cultural institutions in the GDR. As Martha Sprigge has recently noted, despite the emphasis in Anglo-American musicology on the appropriation of Bach and Beethoven for

⁶²⁵ Hanns Eisler, letter to Bertolt Brecht, 13 August 1952, cited in Pistiak, *Darf ich auch Verse von Goethe verwenden?*, 41.

⁶²⁶ Shirley Neilson Blum, *Early Netherlandish Triptychs: A Study in Patronage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 5.

⁶²⁷ Pistiak, 49.

Party purposes in the East, “often there was also a simultaneous bottom-up appropriation, where citizens adopt the same icons as part of their own aesthetic ideals.”⁶²⁸ All of this said, the East German reception of Eisler’s *Vorbild* triptych split between friendly reactions in the press and Party suspicion, partly because Eisler had chosen Goethe’s “Das Göttliche” over Brecht’s “Friedenslied,” and partly because the official approach to classic works was selective, with continuing distrust of formalism and Schillerian aesthetic play.⁶²⁹

Das Vorbild’s left-hand “panel” is a G-minor fugue. Already sketched during Eisler’s American exile as a piano fugue (in A minor) and used for the “Narration” scene in Jean Renoir’s 1947 film *Woman on the Beach*, the fugue became experimental ground for Eisler in *Das Vorbild*; various sketches indicate an introduction he later removed and difficult decisions about how much brass instrumentation to include.⁶³⁰ Eisler’s use of fugue form also literalizes the “centrifugal” movement of speech modes – a spreading-out dynamic that Bakhtin contrasts with the effort, usually associated with power-constellations, to gather and homogenize language.⁶³¹ Eisler’s “chase” suggests other composers’ voices as well: Manfred Grabs has noted the fugue subject’s close relationship to the G-minor fugue from the first part of Bach’s *Well-tempered Klavier*;⁶³² it also echoes the second theme introduced in the first movement of Brahms’ Symphony No. 4. Here is the fugue subject introduced in the viola:

⁶²⁸ Sprigge, 94.

⁶²⁹ Pistiak, 50.

⁶³⁰ Ibid. 35.

⁶³¹ See M. M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 272, and Jørgen Bruhn, “Bachtin og kulturen,” manuscript, 22-25.

⁶³² Manfred Grabs, *Hanns Eisler. Kompositionen – Schriften – Literatur. Ein Handbuch* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984), 3.

Fig. 3.6



Though Pistiak argues that Eisler’s free adaptation is anything but a “statisch-barocke Fuge” [“static-baroque fugue”] in its seventh-progressions, unresolved dissonances, chromatic lines, syncopated rhythms, and fortissimo ending,⁶³³ this antithetical reading discounts the dynamism of Bach’s dance meters and the dissonances in his *Well-tempered Clavier*, a kind of musical experiment in itself, as Bach’s chord progressions tested new technology.⁶³⁴

Eisler’s opening movement, like much of his work recalling older musical forms, both absorbs and disturbs their material character. In this case, the keyboard’s percussive quality is replaced by an amplified (in the sense of orchestral size and volume) string quartet. As in his first Hölderlin fragment, Eisler includes the B-A-C-H theme, this time in reverse motion in the violins,⁶³⁵ perhaps a nod to Schoenberg’s use of retrograde motion in the twelve-tone row. The slow, quiet, minor opening recalls the opening mood of Eisler’s *Rhapsodie*. Stepwise, accented running lines disrupt this melodic flow throughout this movement, gradually spreading into wider intervals – again, in centrifugal motion – and finally overtaking the ruminative “Stimmung” to end decisively with a very Bach-like Picardy third on a G major chord. The movement works pedagogically on two levels: first in its demonstration of fugue form, inflected

⁶³³ Pistiak, 37.

⁶³⁴ Baroque-era tempering of keyboard instruments adjusted tuning for a flaw in the Pythagorean musical ratio system, allowing for movement between keys without the clavier’s going out of tune. See Stuart Isacoff, *Temperament* (New York: Knopf, 2001).

⁶³⁵ Pistiak, 37.

with twentieth-century dissonance, for composition students; and second in its formal but not satirical parody of a composer whose works exemplify human creativity and discernment, however dedicated to God's glory in their time. Eisler's compositional voice works in dialogue with Bach's, in a more collaborative "Spiel," or play in the Schillerian sense, than in the ghostly distance of his Schumannian Hölderlin songs. Read in light of a dialogic approach to musical adaptation, Eisler's Bach references cut horizontally through time, rather than vertically, in Harold Bloom's sense of "the anxiety of influence" resulting in a later artist's hierarchically bound, compensatory response. In place of Bloom's strictly text-based *clinamen*, *kenosis*, *tessera*, and other "revisionary ratios,"⁶³⁶ Eisler's approach works across media and does not set out to correct or reclaim the music of Bach, but rather engages with it in dialogue and montage. It also refuses the rote homage to German "greatness" Party culture officials may have expected. Eisler's play of many voices gives the work far less ideological certainty than a sense of experimentation in a new epoch.

The second movement of *Das Vorbild* is an alto aria – a musical term in this case more related to the church cantata than to the operatic tradition – based on Goethe's "Das Göttliche." Despite the poem's title invoking divinity, it is a Weim-period ode to human powers of choice, dated 1783. "Das Göttliche" has traditionally been grouped among Goethe's poems concerning nature and world-outlook. The poem sets human moral and creative capacity above the realm of nature, however. Ostensibly in free verse, the poem's short lines grow more regular as the stanzas progress, perhaps reflecting the ideal of an increasingly well-ordered existence, in Goethe's post-Sturm und Drang period. Erich Trunz notes that "[j]edes Wort hat Gewicht" ["every word has weight"] in this poem; its slowly uttered speech with two feet per phrase recalls

⁶³⁶ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Second Edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Old High German alliterative verse.⁶³⁷ From the ten unrhymed stanzas, 43 of 60 lines (just over seventy percent) remain in Eisler's adaptation, with minor word changes. Still, Eisler's cuts occur in significant places. He removes the poem's references to divine influences, in the same way the *Hölderlin-Fragmente* break the earthly-divine link, though, true to Enlightenment form, Goethe insists that "wir verehren/ Die Unsterblichen,/ As wären sie Menschen"⁶³⁸ ["we honor/ the immortals/ as if they were human"]. Pistiak sees an implicit "Herrschaftskritik" ["critique of domination"] in these cuts.⁶³⁹ Eisler's move can be seen as very much in line with ideas of proletarian uprising; at the same time, it may also have contributed to Party cultural leaders' discomfort with the composer's early 1950s works.⁶⁴⁰ On a smaller scale, a similar equalizing shift also occurs in Eisler's removal of Goethe's capital letters that begin each line, and in such word changes as "Besten" to "Guten"⁶⁴¹ ["the best" to "the good"]. Eisler also emphasizes nature's "unfeeling" character by repeating the phrase "denn unfühlend,"⁶⁴² an even less comforting thought in his poetic landscape without gods (however abstract). Strangely, he keeps the poem's final phrase, "jener geahneten Wesen"⁶⁴³ ["those intuited beings"], a poetic loophole allowing for the unknown.

The Goethe fragment set as Eisler's "Aria" reads as follows:

⁶³⁷ Goethe, *Werke*, Kommentar, 527.

⁶³⁸ Goethe, *Werke*, 149.

⁶³⁹ Pistiak, 42.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 51.

⁶⁴¹ Goethe, *Werke*, 149 and Hanns Eisler, *Das Vorbild*, in *Lieder und Kantaten*, Vol. 4 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1959), 8.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.* and Eisler, *Das Vorbild*, 13.

Edel sei der Mensch,
hilfreich und gut!
denn das unterscheidet ihn
von allen Wesen,
die wir kennen.

Denn unführend, denn unführend
ist die Natur:
es leuchtet die Sonne
über Böses und Gute,
und dem Verbrecher
glänzen wie dem Guten
der Mond und die Sterne.

Wind und Ströme,
Donner und Hagel
rauschen ihren Weg
und ergreifen
vorüber eilend
einen um den andern.

So auch das Glück
tappt unter die Menge,
faßt bald des Knaben
lockige Unschuld,
bald auch des Kahlen
schuldigen Scheitel.

Nur allein der Mensch
vermag das Unmögliche.
Er unterscheidet,
wählet und richtet;
er kann dem Augenblick
Dauer verleihen.

Er allein darf
den Guten lohnen,
den Bösen strafen,
heilen und retten,
alles Irrende, Schweifende
nützlich verbinden.

Der edle Mensch
sei hilfreich und gut!
Unermüdet schaff er

das Nützliche, Rechte,
sei uns ein Vorbild
jener geahnter Wesen!⁶⁴⁴

[Let man be noble,
helpful, and good!
this sets him apart
from all beings
we know.

For nature is
unfeeling, unfeeling;
the sun shines
on the wicked and the good,
and the moon and stars
shine on the criminal
as on the decent person.

Wind and rivers,
thunder and hail
storm on their way
and grip one
after another
as they rush past.

So, too, fortune
gropes through the crowd,
soon seizes a boy's
curly-haired innocence
and soon the bald head
of the guilty elder.

Only mankind
can take on the impossible.
He distinguishes,
chooses, and judges;
he can make
a moment endure.

He alone may
reward the good
and punish the wicked,
heal and save

⁶⁴⁴ Goethe, *Werke*, 149 and Eisler, *Das Vorbild*, 8-13.

and bind to usefulness
all that errs and strays.

Let the noble man
be helpful and good!
Let him tirelessly achieve
the useful and right;
let him be an example
to us of every intuited being].

The poem itself moves in a steady pace, drawing attention to internal-rhyme sonority (“hilfreich/unterscheidet,” “Augenblick/Dauer”) and binary semantic structure (“Bös und Gute,” “der Mond und die Sterne,” etc.) until the tempo accelerates in the stacked phrases “alles Irrende, Schweifende” and “das Nützliche, Rechte,” leading to Goethe’s final, vowel-lengthened line, “jener gehanter Wesen.”⁶⁴⁵ Eisler brings out not the measured, classical quality of the poem but rather its capacity to change pace. In musical terms, this aria is actually far more akin to recitative. Despite two lingering, repeated phrases that suggest lyrical vocal movement, most of the music works syllabically rather than melismatically, with an unaccompanied opening and irregular meter. At times the voice seems almost to be muttering, rather than thoughtfully intoning Goethe’s weighted words. This Enlightenment paean is voiced more as improvisational and even hesitant thinking-aloud than as declamation. Eisler disrupts metric-syllabic expectations by shifting from 4/4 to 3/4 time on the phrase “denn unfühlend, denn unfühlend” (the reference to “unfeeling” nature), in an estrangement technique that has been termed “metrical dissonance,” also used by East German composer Kurt Schwaen with precedent in Schumann.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ See Hart, “Text Out of Step”; Kurt Schwaen, *Liebsame Beschäftigung: 11 Lieder nach Gedichten von Günter Kunert für Gesang und Klavier* (Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1994); and Harald Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* (New York: Oxford University Press,

Fig. 3.7

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and instrumental ensemble. The vocal part is for an Alto-Solo, with lyrics: "ken - nen. Denn un - füh - lend, denn un - füh - lend ist die Na -". The instrumental parts include Clarinet (A), Bassoon, Violin, Trumpet, Violoncello (div.), and Keyboard. The score is written in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The vocal line is marked with a dynamic of *pp* (pianissimo) and features a complex rhythmic pattern with frequent changes in meter (4/4, 3/4, 2/4). The instrumental parts provide harmonic support, with the strings and woodwinds playing sustained notes and moving lines.

The effect of this syllabic-accentual shift is similar to that of the 2/4 “break” at the end of each verse in Eisler’s “Solidaritätslied.” Quickly changing harmonic rhythm also prevents the voice from soaring in a predictable line. The dynamic marking “piano” throughout most of this movement, until the firm, loud, major ending, also gives the alto voice a thinking-aloud quality, as if half whispering, rather than declaiming text by a poetic giant for a new epoch. If Goethe’s subjunctive-1 line “Edel sei der Mensch” [“Let man be noble”] functions as performative speech,⁶⁴⁷ as a call that not only invites but incites action, it is only in its final repetition (this time assuming mankind is already “noble”) that the voice seems ready to fully claim it. Throughout the aria, Eisler seems more concerned with picking up the fugue motif from the previous movement and exploring twelve-tone lines⁶⁴⁸ than with voicing a centripetal, homogenous call to responsible agency. The actual lyric line is given to the flute and clarinet,

1999), 46-52. For a discussion of the more specific “displacement dissonance,” see Yonatan Malin, *Songs in Motion: Rhythm and Meter in the German Lied* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 52.

⁶⁴⁷ See J. Hillis Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

⁶⁴⁸ Pistiak, 43.

which do in fact soar in a predictable melody in an orchestral interlude and postlude, when the strings double them; the aria is theirs, entirely without words.

Fig. 3.8



Once again, Eisler’s text-setting spreads out its voices and adds contradictions to the source material. This simultaneous aria (flute and clarinet) and recitative (voice) also confirm the spatial, non-linear character of the triptych itself. Despite Eisler’s initial sense that Goethe’s “Das Göttliche” spoke for the new Socialist state, his compositional instincts complicated the project, giving the poem a ruminating, even hesitant quality; perhaps the music’s polyphonic space allows for such hesitancy in its implied multiple subject-positions. Politically, like the *Rhapsodie*, this work speaks more to a time of difficult transition than to the unified celebration of shared ideals its text seems to indicate. This critical distance between text and music also questions the appropriation of cultural “greatness” for ideological ends, whether right or left.

The third movement of *Das Vorbild* is set to Goethe’s 1815 “Symbolum.” Impressed by the efforts of a Russian Freemason in protecting Weimar from Napoleon’s troops, Goethe composed the poem for the Amalia Freemasons’ Lodge, of which he was also a member. The poem’s title reflects the significance of the visual symbol or emblem in freemasonry; its allegorical focus is on human life akin to the Mason’s purposeful path through joys and sorrows. Like “Das Göttliche,” “Symbolum” carries heft in short, twice-accented lines. Eisler set the poem in its entirety, with several important word changes and repetitions. In the first line, he

changes Goethe's "[d]es Maurers" ["of Masons"] to "Mannes" ["of a man"], broadening the allegory's scope; his repetition of "vorwärts" ["forward"] adds emphasis to a word already freighted with agit-prop association, as in the Brecht-Eisler "Solidaritätslied" that opens famously with "Vorwärts, nicht vergessen" – a word Eisler adds to Goethe's poem in a later stanza, replacing "Versäumt nicht" ["Do not neglect"] with "Vergeßt nicht" ["Do not forget"].⁶⁴⁹ Here is Eisler's version of the poem, with the archaic spellings from his Goethe edition intact and the poet's line-initial capitalizations removed:

Des Mannes Wandeln,
es gleicht dem Leben,
und sein Bestreben,
es gleicht dem Handeln
der Menschen auf Erden.

Die Zukunft decket
Schmerzen und Glücke.
schrittweise dem Blicke,
doch ungeschreckt
dringen wir vorwärts, wir vorwärts.

Und schwer und schwerer
hängt eine Hülle
mit Ehrfurcht. Stille
ruhn oben die Sterne
und unten die Gräber.

Betracht' sie genauer
und siehe, so melden
im Busen der Helden
sich wandelnde Schauer
und ernste Gefühle, und ernste Gefühle.

Dich rufen von drüben
die Stimmen der Geister,
die Stimmen der Meister;
Vergeßt nicht, zu üben
die Kräfte des Guten.

⁶⁴⁹ Eisler, *Das Vorbild*, 14-17.

Hier flechten sich Kronen
in ewiger Stille,
die sollen mit Fülle
die Tätigen lohnen!
Wir heißen euch hoffen,
wir heißen euch hoffen, wir heißen euch hoffen.⁶⁵⁰

[The path of man
resembles life
and its strivings,
it resembles the actions
of people on earth.

The future still covers
pain and good fortune.
Still, step by step
we keep the gaze unafraid
and press forward, press forward.

And heavily, more heavily
hangs a shroud
with awe. Silently
the stars rest overhead
and down below, the graves.

Look at them more closely
and see, this is the way
in the hero's breast
answer ever-shifting
chills and earnest thoughts, and earnest thoughts.

Yet from the distance are calling
the voices of spirits,
the voices of sages.
Do not forget to practice
the powers of the good.

Here crowns are woven
in eternal silence,
they should reward in full
the ones who act.
We wish you hope,
we wish you hope, we wish you hope.]

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

Resembling some of the paeans to quasi-religious Enlightenment values in Mozart's (also Freemasonry-inspired) opera *Die Zauberflöte*, Eisler's treatment of "Symbolum" is nonetheless secular, its heroism grounded less in Masonic brotherhood than in comradeship. The Freemasons' valorizing of "human-engineered salvation and philanthropy" can be seen as linked to the Socialist world in which Eisler was composing;⁶⁵¹ its collaborative emphasis plays out in the music itself as well. Arnold Pistiak has pointed out that despite the initial impression of a single speaker, the poem opens into polyvocal possibility in its final "*Wir heißen euch hoffen*"⁶⁵² [*We wish you-plural hope,*" italics mine]. I would add that the stanza invoking the voices of spirits and sages also gives the poem a broader acoustic space, in which the heavy, silent realm of stars and graves allows for attunement to subtle sounds from various sources. The adapted poem's final repetition also extends and opens its space, as if allowing for echoes to circle through it. Though Eisler heard Socialist state-formation resonance in this poem during a time of distancing from all that had come before, from fascist genocide to capitalist comfort, Goethe's way forward does not appear to be univocal ideology.

The movement begins with a triple-pianissimo vocal melody more akin to strophic folksong than to recitative or aria, over simple D-flat-major octaves in the strings. With one note per syllable, this melody rises stepwise to a climax, underlined by the strings' fortissimo accents, at the end of each verse. Subtle metric changes, combined with this suspended climax that does not return downward as traditional strophic melodies do, once again give the vocal line a thinking-aloud quality not so obvious in Goethe's generally triple-metered text. Throughout the movement, Eisler plays with and against Baroque conventions, from the ground bass (which

⁶⁵¹ Thanks to Thomas Pfau for noting this connection, 6 May 2015.

⁶⁵² Eisler, *Das Vorbild*, 17.

sometimes doubles the alto in thirds, as traditional *cantus firmus* would not) to the alto's anti-Mannerist ascent on the line referring to graves down below,⁶⁵³ and finally to a distinctly Baroque oboe melody that ends the movement.

Eisler plays with his own musical material in "Symbolum" as well, taking up the four-note fugue subject from the first movement and setting it in retrograde motion, another reference to Schoenberg.⁶⁵⁴ **Fig. 3.9**

Alt-Solo

ppp

1. Des Man-nes Wan-deln, es gleicht dem Le-ben, und sein Be-stre-ben, es gleicht dem
2. Die Zu-kunft dek-ket Schmer-zen und Glük-ke schritt-weis dem Blick-ke, doch un-ge-

Once again, many voices fill the musical space of this triptych "panel," the voices of "Geister" and "Meister" ["spirits" and "masters"] both living and dead embedded in the music, along with the alto's final "wir" ["we"] and the oboe's voice with its last, Baroque-style "word." Even this is a word, in Bakhtin's sense, not to be taken at face value, a word "with a sideward glance, [a] word with a loophole, [a] parodic word"⁶⁵⁵ that calls attention to musical "heritage" in its vulnerability to appropriation and even fetishization. The alto voice itself carries enough of an androgynous character to be more open than fixed; in the context of this composition, her voice takes on political significance as well. Frequent Brecht-Eisler collaborator Ernst Busch actually sang this music in its first version, which still drew on text from Brecht's "Friedenslied," with

⁶⁵³ Strict musical Mannerism, in which vocal or instrumental movement mirrors textual references to light, dark, descent, ascent, etc. was typical of early Baroque scoring by Monteverdi and others but continued to influence word-painting conventions in the work of later composers like Bach, with string patterns imitating the "plunging" waters of baptism in Cantata BWV 7, "Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam," for example.

⁶⁵⁴ See Pistiak, 48.

⁶⁵⁵ Bruhn and Lundquist, 34.

positive reviews despite Busch's enemies among top politicians in the GDR.⁶⁵⁶ Eisler continued to support Busch but ultimately decided on an alto voice, particularly for the Goethe "Aria." That this movement is more aria in name than in musical fact suggests that a singer-actor such as Busch could easily have performed it, adding to its gendered and political ambiguity.

Faustus damned

Das Vorbild was not well received by cultural officials in the GDR. In 1951, as Eisler was composing the cantata, the SED's cultural department named socialist realism the "guiding aesthetic doctrine for all forms of artistic production"; the Ministry of Culture awarded composers' contracts accordingly and required membership in the GDR musicians' union (the Verband Deutscher Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler, or VDK), in which Party members carried special privilege and critical influence.⁶⁵⁷ Socialist realism in music took on a fairly narrow definition during this period, based on established classical and folk genres; composers who found favor with the SED tended to imitate older models without pushing modernist boundaries. As Laura Silverberg notes, "Ernst Hermann Meyer's *Mansfelder Oratorium* (1950), lauded in the GDR as a textbook example of Socialist realism, is virtually indistinguishable from Handel in harmonic language, alternation of solo aria, recitative, and choir, and use of the chorus."⁶⁵⁸ Eisler's twelve-tone-inflected, centrifugal take on Baroque cantata form was more adaptation than imitation – and, in refusing to homogenize its own musical and textual languages to fit the ruling ideology, as interventionist as the composer's exile songs had been.

⁶⁵⁶ Pistiak, *Nie und nimmer: Überlegungen zu Hanns Eislers Projekt einer Faustoper* (Berlin: edition bodoni, 2013), 39.

⁶⁵⁷ Laura Silverberg, "Between Dissonance and Dissidence: Socialist Modernism in the German Democratic Republic," in *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 26:1, Winter 2009, 48-49.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 50.

Documents from SED cultural meetings in the early 1950s, under the shadow of Soviet Central Committee secretary Andrei Zhdanov's charges against Prokofiev and Shostakovich in 1948,⁶⁵⁹ indicate that the formalism debate of the 1930s was hardly a thing of the past. In a November 1952 proposal for the "Arbeitsprogramm der Staatlichen Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten" ["Work Program of the State Commission for Artistic Matters"], Eisler's Goethe-Bach cantata is sharply criticized for "Unklarheiten in der nationalen Frage nicht frei von formalistischen Elementen" ["ambiguities not free from formalist elements with regard to the national question"] and "eine deutliche Zurückhaltung an den Tag, die typischen Eigenschaften der Erbauer des Sozialismus, nämlich Tatkraft und Begeisterung für die großen Aufgaben unserer Zeit, musikalisch zu gestalten" ["a clear reluctance to musically shape the typical qualities of the builders of Socialism, namely vigor and excitement for the great tasks of our time"].⁶⁶⁰ The almost-whispered Goethe "Aria," with its difficult-to-track melodic line, may have been one signal of "reluctance"; Eisler's formal play with musical materials and citations clearly raised concerns as well. The pianist Eberhard Rebling, in his capacity as editor for the *Musik und Gesellschaft* [*Music and Society*] journal, attacked Eisler more personally during this period, noting his apparent failure to enact a "wirkliche innere Verschmelzung seines eigenes Lebens und Erlebens mit der stürmischen Entwicklung des deutschen Volkes, mit der Begeisterung für den Aufbau, mit den Erbauern der Stalinallee"⁶⁶¹ ["a true inner melding of his own life and experience with the stormy rise of the German people, with excitement about what is being built, with the builders of Stalinallee"]. Lack of enthusiasm for monumental Soviet architecture aside,

⁶⁵⁹ See Richard Taruskin, chapters "Safe Harbors" and "Shostakovich and the Inhuman," in *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 468-544.

⁶⁶⁰ Peggy Klemke, *Tatgeber oder Tabuisierte – Komponisten in der DDR* (Leipzig: Tectum Verlag, 2007), 145.

⁶⁶¹ Translation of Eberhard Rebling, "Sowjetskaja musika," cited in *Ibid.* 145.

Eisler was still expected to disavow the “cosmopolitan” formalism and “reactionary” classicism of such frowned-on composers as Schoenberg and Stravinsky.⁶⁶² That Rebling uses the word “cosmopolitan” twice in his article – the second time in the phrase “heimatlosen Kosmopolitismus”⁶⁶³ [“cosmopolitanism without a homeland”], with its anti-Semitic charge hardly forgotten so recently after the Nazi era – shows how ambiguous the cultural agenda of the new “anti-fascist” state actually was. Eisler’s music shapes not univocal Socialist vigor but exactly this texture of instability, more true to the East German political scene in the early 1950s than its leadership wanted to see acknowledged. The *Faustus* project, with its own textual ambiguities and dramatic play, pushed his critics over the edge.

Eisler’s opera project drew criticism partly for failing to honor Goethe’s legacy, in the sense that “nur eine eindeutige, prosozialistische Interpretation der Klassiker geduldet wurde” [only an unambiguous, pro-Socialist interpretation of the classics was tolerated] by the SED government’s cultural policies.⁶⁶⁴ In Goethe’s case, this meant valorizing the Faust figure in particular as “Tatmensch und somit als indirekter Vorreiter des Sozialismus”⁶⁶⁵ [“a man of action and therefore as an indirect forerunner of Socialism”]. Aside from portraying Faust as a negative-example traitor to the peasant class, Eisler drew only tangentially on Goethe’s play in his libretto. His project adapts older puppet-theater versions of the story (themselves adaptations of popular books such as the sixteenth-century *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*), in a montage of historical theater, capitalist-American fantasia, and “Schwarzspiele” [“black games”] – the new,

⁶⁶² Ibid.; see also Pistiak, *Nie und nimmer*, 16.

⁶⁶³ Rebling, cited in Pistiak, *Nie und nimmer*, 23.

⁶⁶⁴ Wißmann, 199.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

illusory art form that Mephistopheles teaches Faust, in itself a play on the formalism debate.⁶⁶⁶ Eisler's project also grew out of conversations with Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Bloch, Arnold Schoenberg, and Thomas Mann during his California exile. In 1947, Eisler wrote to Mann that his novel *Doktor Faustus* had left him "auf das tiefste erschüttert" ["shaken to the depths"]; he was particularly fascinated by the book's dark "Stimmung."⁶⁶⁷ In response to reading Eisler's libretto in November 1952, Mann wrote, "Was für eine wunderartig-merkwürdige Arbeit! Eine neue, *sehr* neue Version des Faust-Stoffes, der sich tatsächlich als unerschöpflich, immer wieder inspirierend, immer wieder wandelbar erweist"⁶⁶⁸ ["What wondrous and strange work! A new, *very* new version of the Faust material that actually manifests as inexhaustible, again and again inspiring, always changeable"]. Eisler's contribution to this adaptation chain, in John Bryant's sense of "fluid" revisionary works,⁶⁶⁹ is not a heroic narrative but a carnivalesque, critical work, a silenced opera about a "kleinen, finsternen Faust"⁶⁷⁰ ["small, dark Faust"] who, like Mann's composer-Faust Adrian Leverkühn, decays and perishes.⁶⁷¹

Eisler envisioned his *Faustus* project as part of a larger trilogy titled *Die deutsche Miserere*, its quasi-liturgical title referring to German suffering. This trilogy, meant for the new German national opera, would offer a panoramic view of German history and take on the

⁶⁶⁶ Pistiak, *Nie und nimmer*, 60. The term "Schwarzspiele" has more recently been taken up in computer gaming.

⁶⁶⁷ See Wißmann, 197-198.

⁶⁶⁸ Cited in Wißmann, 198.

⁶⁶⁹ John Bryant, "Textual identity and adaptive revision: Editing adaptation as a fluid text," in Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, eds., *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 49-54.

⁶⁷⁰ Wißmann, 199-200.

⁶⁷¹ Pistiak, *Nie und nimmer*, 48.

question of German identity after the Second World War.⁶⁷² Even in early discussions about the project, its less-than-optimistic title became suspect: Ernst Hermann Meyer reported hearing concern “daß die deutsche Geschichte keineswegs arm an fortschrittlichen Episoden sei, und das Bild einer sogenannten ‘deutsche Miserere’ einer Korrektur bedürfte”⁶⁷³ [“that German history in no way lacked for progressive episodes, and the idea of a so-called ‘German Miserere’ would require correction”]. Eisler’s decision to set his own text, combined with his alternative, complicated vision of “Germanness” in the early GDR, led to later accusations of “hubris.”⁶⁷⁴ Experimenting with the *Faustus* material in his own verse allowed Eisler even more room for formal play – another cause for concern – than in his Goethe settings. Eisler’s libretto tends toward iambic “walking” or “heartbeat” meter, with end and internal rhyme, alliteration, and chiasm showing the influence Hölderlin’s poetry in particular had had on him over the past decade. At the same time, and very much unlike Hölderlin’s verse, Brechtian diction gives the text a straightforward, vernacular quality. The result is a poetic hybrid that brings two very different poetic periods and modes into dialectical play. Here is an example, from the end of the libretto, of a song a young boy sings hopefully, despite Faust’s failure to redeem himself at the last moment:

Ich ging auf dürrer Heiden,
da hört ein Stimm ich singen,
tät mir wunderbar erklingen:
“Komm, lieber Tag;
geh, finstre Nacht!
Fried und Freud

⁶⁷² Wißmann, 188.

⁶⁷³ Ernst Hermann Meyer, “Unsere Künstler wenden sich der neuen Nationaloper zu,” in *Neues Deutschland*, 25 February 1953, cited in Pistiak, *Nie und nimmer*, 24.

⁶⁷⁴ Wißmann, 199.

Und Freundlichkeit erwacht.”⁶⁷⁵

[I walked on barren meadows,
and there a voice was singing,
sounded wonderful to me:
“Come, lovely day;
go, dark night!
Peace and joy
and friendliness awake.”]

These lines are one example of the “Verfremdungseffekt” at work throughout the libretto: optimistic singing in a tragic moment shows the words’ potential emptiness. Other textual modes in *Johannes Faustus* include monologue, burlesque, and gestic stage directions (e.g. “*Zwischen dem Vorhang steckt sich eine riesige Hand aus – es ist die Hand Mephistos – und zieht Faust in die Bühne*”⁶⁷⁶ [“Between the curtains a giant hand sticks out – it is Mephisto’s hand – and pulls Faust onto the stage”]). Overall, the puppet-show character of the opera dominates.⁶⁷⁷ The fourth Schwarzspiel is introduced with this colorful, pluralistic tableau based on biblical tropes:

*In reicher Landschaft Adam und Eva; ein Kind zu ihren Füßen. Menschengruppe: Weiße, Schwarze, Braune, Gelbe, einander freundlich zuwinkend. Löwe, Adler, Bär, friedlich miteinander lagernd. Wölfe mit Schafen, Tiger mit Rehen.*⁶⁷⁸

[*In a rich landscape, Adam and Eve: a child at their feet. A group of people: white, black, brown, yellow, waving to each other in a friendly way. Lions, eagles, bears peacefully encamped with each other. Wolves with sheep. Tigers with deer.*]

In addition to its visually bright and playful stage directions, the libretto’s carnivalesque variation of diction, including folksong, lyric rhapsody, plainspoken dialogue, and Mephisto’s occasional nonsense syllables, works as Bakhtinian heteroglossia (a term more applicable than “polyphony” to a textual libretto), and keeping the narrative from becoming either too “high” or

⁶⁷⁵ Hanns Eisler, *Johannes Faustus. Oper.* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1952), 83.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 77.

⁶⁷⁷ Wißmann, 195.

⁶⁷⁸ Eisler, *Johannes Faustus*, 54.

too “low,” too stable or predictable. This vocal variation is not play for its own sake but rather an attempt to reflect on power, human weakness, and a profoundly disturbed national history.

The drama itself begins with a prologue in the Underworld, where a lack of great souls has become a problem; Mephistopheles is called on to pressure Faust into betraying his own people in the sixteenth-century Peasants’ Wars, in order to win his spirit for Pluto. Disenchanted with religion, Faust gladly turns to darker arts and makes a twenty-four-year pact with Mephistopheles. He has been part of Thomas Müntzer’s peasant uprising but willingly forgets his solidarity with his own class – and, significantly for Eisler – also forgets its revolutionary songs. He betrays the cause, calling it an error, and attempts to flee his own bad conscience in an American fantasy world, “Atlanta.” Like Kafka’s *Amerika* and the Brecht-Weill *Mahagonny*, this capitalist vision is a grotesque theater of pleasure and emptiness, recalling the Hollywood culture Eisler had known in his exile years. This second act also includes painful references to slavery and to the burning of Jews. Mephistopheles tempts Faust with his “Schwarzenspiele,” in which a golden age of brotherhood, equality, and peace appears, horrifying the powerful players of Atlanta. Faust gains fame there, inciting jealousy, but decides to return to cold, gray Wittenberg (reminiscent of postwar Germany for Eisler) and to become an example to the Germans. He aligns himself with power but finds that its gold turns into dust when touched, perhaps a reference to the crash of 1929.⁶⁷⁹ Thanks to Mephistopheles, he is also blamed for the shooting of a revolutionary fighter; it is the nobles, not the peasants, who extol Faust as a great example. After trying to wash imaginary blood from his hands, Faust tells his life story in the *Confessio* scene. With time as his one way out, given twenty-four hours to make up for his errors, Faust

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid. 193.

rushes through the city, but ultimately good deeds are of no help. Mephisto tricks him with the peasants' own rule: their workday is just twelve hours, and Faust's time is up.

Like Brecht's *Mutter Courage* and *Galileo* plays, Eisler's *Johannes Faustus* uses a narrative set in the past to speak to twentieth-century socio-political issues. This opera libretto is less reflective of the early GDR, however, than of the years preceding the Nazi takeover of Germany. In his notes on the project, Eisler states this explicitly:

Ich werde aufmerksam gemacht, dass die Parallele mit den Bauernkriegen für die heutige Zeit ja gar nicht stimmt. Deutschland hat den imperialistischen Krieg verloren. Man kann die Niederlage Deutschlands 1945, die eine Befreiung ist, nicht mit den Bauernkriegen vergleichen ... Vergleichbar muss es sein mit 1933, als die Arbeiter geschlagen wurden und Hitler zum neuen Kriege rüstete.⁶⁸⁰

[I will make it clear that the parallel with the Peasants' Wars don't apply at all to the present time. Germany has lost the imperialist war. One cannot compare the downfall of Germany in 1945, which is a liberation, with the Peasants' Wars. ... This must be comparable with 1933, when the workers were struck down and Hitler mobilized for new wars.]

Eisler also links the bloodthirsty Swabian Duke in his opera to Hitler.⁶⁸¹ Other figures reflect more contemporary concerns in "grotesk-satirisch" caricature: the folksy Hanswurst (whom Eisler compared to Sancho Panza or Leporello, not in a flattering way) and the dogmatic Wagner, who embodies both functionary officiousness and formalist preaching, up-ending the formalism reproaches Eisler himself had received.⁶⁸² As the renegade with a bad conscience, Faust appears as a negative example, like Brecht's *Mutter Courage*. He does not "develop," as what Arnold Pistiak calls the "herrschenden undialektischen Dialektik-Verständnis"⁶⁸³ ["ruling

⁶⁸⁰ Hanns Eisler, notes on *Johannes Faustus*, Hanns Eisler Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Sign. 4533, VI.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² Pistiak, *Nie und nimmer*, 44-45.

⁶⁸³ Ibid. 52.

undialectical understanding of dialectics”] would have him do, but rather works in a Brechtian dialectic, exposing a problem through contrast (with the virtuous peasant Karl, for example) and through estrangement rather than identification. For Eisler, as for Brecht in his *Tui-Kritik* on intellectuals who “sell out” to the market or the ruling ideology, Faust puts personal needs and weakness over political commitment.⁶⁸⁴ His failure to overcome this weakness put him, and Eisler’s entire project, at odds with the new Socialist state.

In a series of Wednesday meetings at the East Berlin Akademie der Künste in spring 1953, Eisler’s project was discussed in terms that, according to reports released in 1991, indicate that he had struck a nerve in the young, if already thoroughly bureaucratized, GDR.⁶⁸⁵ His multivalent, non-“realist,” puppet-show approach to material solidly associated with Goethe (or a limited idea of Goethe), combined with his treatment of Faust as a negative example, disturbed politically well-placed academics and second-string cultural ideologues alike. Despite positive responses from Thomas Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Bertolt Brecht, Uwe Berger, Berold Viertel, and other creative artists respected in the DDR, Eisler’s libretto spelled out in text what his Goethe settings had suggested in music: a dangerous unwillingness to support the State with one-voiced enthusiasm. An article released on May 14, 1953 made the Academy’s judgment public:

Kommt es nicht gerade jetzt, in dieser Zeit darauf an, die neuen Kunstwerke im Geiste des sozialistischen Realismus zu gestalten, alle Überreste des Proletkult auszumerzen und das klassische Erbe zum Gemeingut aller unserer Werktätigen zu machen? Im “Johannes Faustus” finden wir aber mehr als *einen* Angriff auf unsere wertvollsten klassischen Traditionen ... Er ist pessimistisch, volksfremd, ausweglos, antinational. Daher halten wir diesen Text für ungeeignet als Grundlage für eine neue deutsche Nationaloper.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁴ See Albrecht Betz, *Hanns Eisler: Musik einer Zeit, die sich eben bildet* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1976), 191, and Wißmann, 187.

⁶⁸⁵ See Klemke, 154, and Wißmann, 198-199.

⁶⁸⁶ “Das ‘Faust’-Problem und die deutsche Geschichte,” in *Neues Deutschland*, 14 May 1953, cited in Bunge, 101. The term “Proletkult” refers to “proletarskaya kultura,” a Soviet avant-garde movement that

[Is this not exactly the time to shape new artworks in the spirit of Socialist Realism, in order to eradicate all remnants of the Proletkult and to apply the classical inheritance to the common good of all our workers? In “Johannes Faustus,” however, we find more than *one* attack on our most valuable classical traditions ... It is pessimistic, alien to the people, hopeless, anti-national. Therefore we consider this text unsuitable as the foundation for a new German national opera.]

Eisler responded to this attack, far harsher than his own presumed violation of German literary inheritance, with a pained and painstaking series of notes that resulted in a lengthy written response. Here Eisler posed a pointed question regarding Faustus’ moral choices: “Ist das unpatriotisch? Ist das eine Idee, die der zentralen Frage Deutschlands, nämlich der nationalen, hilft oder sie schädigt?”⁶⁸⁷ [“Is this unpatriotic? Is this an idea that helps Germany’s central question, namely the national, or damages it?”]. By foregrounding a negative example like Brecht’s *Mutter Courage*, Eisler had invited critical response in performers and audience, not mere affirmation of a patriotic stance. This application of “epic theater” was apparently too risky for the SED’s cultural bureaucracy. If Eisler was perceived as “dissident” in East Berlin, it was not for disloyalty to Socialist and even Communist ideals, but for his efforts to call the existing system to greater rigor and responsibility. As Laura Silverberg puts it, “one can best describe the East German dissident as a reform socialist committed to finding alternative modes of expression within a broader Marxist-Leninist framework, but not opposing the framework itself.”⁶⁸⁸

Despite his ability to expose his accusers’ nationalistic small-mindedness, Eisler plunged into depression after this crisis and traveled to Vienna for part of the year. If it was any consolation, Brecht suffered Party censure for his own *Urfaust* project in 1952-53 as well. The

also supported the revolutionary cause in 1917; this formalist-Marxist hybrid had disturbed Party officials as much as Eisler’s early 1950s projects did in East Berlin.

⁶⁸⁷ Hanns Eisler, “Stellungnahme zur Faustus-Polemik,” in *Schriften 1948-1962, Musik und Politik*, 289.

⁶⁸⁸ Silverberg, 55.

playwright saw his adaptation of Goethe's early version of the play as "an experiment in testing a contemporary, critical reading of works from the canon which the official terminology referred to as the 'Great Classic Heritage,'" yet after the play's premiere in Potsdam and Berlin, Brecht faced accusations of cosmopolitanism, formalism, and anti-nationalism just as harsh as those directed at Eisler.⁶⁸⁹ Brecht's other frequent collaborator of the period, Paul Dessau, was also subjected to heavy criticism for "the excessive dissonance, rhythmic irregularities, and lack of clear melodies in his opera *Die Verurteilung des Lukullus*."⁶⁹⁰ In Eisler's case, the nascent East German secret police took note of the *Faustus* controversy; in July 1953 his distraught mental state and growing alcoholism became apparent in a struggle with a West Berlin taxi driver as the composer was attempting to return to the East, prompting an SED report and a collection of newspaper articles in what would become Eisler's Stasi file, with material on his West German reception gathered into the early 1980s.⁶⁹¹ That the secret police report named him "Johannes Eisler," despite his well-established reputation as "Hanns," may have been a sly comment on his controversial libretto.⁶⁹² After the *Faustus* failure, Eisler considered moving to Vienna. His movements were tracked by the police, who used his driver and housekeeper as informants, going so far as to note, after a trip cancellation to Vienna in summer 1953, that his bed had not been used.⁶⁹³ Eisler chose to stay in Berlin, even in the wake of the violent State response to the

⁶⁸⁹ Carl Weber, "Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble – the Making of a Model," in Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 182.

⁶⁹⁰ Silverberg, 57.

⁶⁹¹ Archiv der Behörde des Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), Sign. 14247.

⁶⁹² Ibid. Bericht 6, 17.7.1953.

⁶⁹³ Ibid. Aktenvermerk 2, 16.7.1953.

June 1953 protests; he remained faithful to the founding ideas of Socialism through all its disappointments.⁶⁹⁴

Cross-reading and conclusion

Amid the new German Democratic Republic's nationalist appropriation of Goethe and other cultural icons, Hanns Eisler subverted univocal ideology in his musical treatments of aesthetic heritage. Having experimented with two Goethe poems while still in wartime exile, Eisler took on fragments of *Faust II* in his 1949 *Rhapsodie* to celebrate the poet's birth alongside the founding of the GDR. The already polyvocal nature of these texts – from Mephistopheles in female disguise to the plural Chorus – is amplified in a kaleidoscopic orchestral setting in which the soprano voice, with its own multiple subject positions, is surrounded and interrupted by other voices, styles, textures, and tropes. The *Rhapsodie* also includes various compositional voices in its self-citation from Eisler's film music of the 1940s, as well as in its allusions to Mahler, Richard Strauss, and Schoenberg. In addition, the frequent staging and interrupting of musical "Stimmungen," from the prelude's gloomy mood to the interlude's Viennese lilt, gives Eisler's *Rhapsodie* a critical capacity to make listeners aware of musical trance-states they may have come to expect in film music, opera, and symphonic concerts. For a work commissioned to honor the new Socialist state, this music does not whip up nationalist zeal but rather exposes the fragile complexity of a country still marked by rubble, struggling for a new language of hope, and haunted by the misused lyricism of its past.

Analyzed as two-way adaptation, Eisler's dialogic play with source material de-hierarchizes the iconic Goethe and allows his language to be heard as provisional and subject to revision, rather than as a source of creative anxiety or as text set in ideological stone. In the case

⁶⁹⁴ Wißmann, 202.

of *Faust II*, Goethe's own decades-long revisionary process – both in life and in work – is reflected more accurately in Eisler's music than in the prevailing, and limited, early GDR view of him as a forerunner of Socialism. As also becomes clear in the cross-reading of Eisler's Hölderlin, the composer's breaking and re-functioning of these texts results in a paradoxical fidelity to source material often subjected to ideologically monovocal interpretations. At the same time, what changes most noticeably in a post-Eisler reading of Goethe is the difference between progressive, linear movement in the text and the novelistic, polyphonic simultaneity its twentieth-century musical adaptation embodies. Noting a similar distinction between Goethe and Dostoevsky, Bakhtin finds that the latter works in terms of spatiality more than time, and sets out to depict events “in their simultaneity, to juxtapose and counterpose them.”⁶⁹⁵ Eisler's Goethe settings are similarly – and surprisingly, in light of Bakhtin's distinction – spatial, simultaneously layered, and contradictory, opening the source texts to a less temporally progressive reading that foregrounds their collage-like elements. The multivalence of voices and moods in Act III, from which Eisler chose his fragments, becomes even more apparent when reading the text with the *Rhapsodie* in mind. Do the deceptive Phorkyas' words (“Macht euch schnell von Fabeln frei,/ Eurer Götter alt Gemenge/ Laßt es hin, es ist vorbei”⁶⁹⁶ [“Free yourselves from the old fables,/ The old tumult of your gods,/ Let it go, it's over now”]) carry truth, or, as Eisler's music suggests, do the old received words, sounds, and thoughts pile up at the threshold of the postwar era, making for unstable ground? The music holds a paradox of both stances, just one example of the complexity the cultural leadership of the new GDR did not want to hear in nationalist music. From the Chorus' lament upon Euphorion's death, Eisler

⁶⁹⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Kindle locations 1271-1281.

⁶⁹⁶ Goethe, 375.

chooses only the more optimistic final lines and sets them in a folksong mode, only to interrupt them with percussive piano – as also occurs after the singer’s first solo passage. Once again, the music talks back – unlike the diegetic song in Goethe’s script, which reflects Euphorion’s embodiment of traditional ideas of Poetry, in its sheer melodiousness. Reading this passage in the text, with its imaginary music (since the play was intended to be read aloud), an underlying potential for subversive sound emerges. Poetry is not all beauty; in its violent death, it becomes a fragmented, irruptive presence in the world.

Eisler’s cantata *Das Vorbild*, written as a teaching-piece for his students, adapts Goethe’s “Die Göttliche” and “Symbolum” for alto voice and orchestra. The work’s complexity is evident not only in its “aggregate”⁶⁹⁷ triptych structure and fugal/centrifugal movement, but also in its many voices. Even within Goethe’s texts, a plural “Menge” [“crowd”], the voices of past spirits and teachers, and a singular-to-plural speaker in “Symbolum”⁶⁹⁸ populate what might otherwise be interpreted as a single lyric “I’s” praise of Enlightenment individuality. Eisler de-hierarchizes the poems, both at the thematic level, in removing most references to the otherworldly, and at the visual-textual level, in beginning each line with a small letter. Instead of gathering diverse voices into a homogenous setting, the music continually spreads them further out with widening intervals, variation on the fugue subject, and instrumental melody that picks up where the human voice leaves off. Goethe’s measured texts sound more unpredictable, centrifugal, and improvisational, foregrounding subtle changes in tempo on the page. These are not words set in stone but human improvisations on Enlightenment ideals. Eisler’s setting of the actually recitative-like “Aria” (“Die Göttliche”) and folksong-but-only-to-a-point “Symbolum”

⁶⁹⁷ Blum, 5.

⁶⁹⁸ Eisler, *Das Vorbild*, 1-17.

foreground this polyvocal, multivalent aspect of the texts, with allusions to Bach, Brahms, and Schoenberg, and with formal Baroque parody and argument in instrumental voices. Such contradictory “Stimmungen” (in terms of both voice and mood) give the singer’s lines in the “Aria” an erratic, thinking-aloud quality, while flute and clarinet do the lyric singing. In “Symbolum,” retrograde play on the fugue theme from the first movement destabilizes what might appear as an otherwise forward-thinking paean to human wisdom. These settings reveal the underlying improvisational, pluralistic character of Goethe’s poems.

Cultural officials in the early GDR criticized Eisler’s Goethe adaptations, particularly *Das Vorbild* and the unfinished *Faustus* opera, for their ambiguous dialogue with source texts and for their formalist play. It is striking that the composer’s own words, not his music, brought the crisis to a head in 1953. Instead of opening a new epoch of German national opera with a Socialist-realist *Faust* that would honor Goethe as a forerunner of the new state, Eisler’s project draws more on puppet-theater treatments of the *Faust* material than on Goethe, looks back to the conditions that allowed Nazism to grow, performs a critique of human weakness, and creates yet another carnivalesque work of many voices, styles, and gestures. In addition, Eisler was well aware not only of the nationalistic co-opting of Goethe and other canonical writers, both on the right and on the left, but also of the capitalist tendency to do the same. Three years after his death, his friend Ernst Fischer defended these words of Eisler’s in *Die Zeit* (an article included in Eisler’s posthumously-ongoing Stasi file): “Machthaber trugen die Haut der Völker zu Markte, doch Goethe auf den Lippen. Finanztransaktionen wurden im Schatten von Schiller-Zitaten abgewickelt”⁶⁹⁹ [“Rulers wore the peoples’ skin to the market, but with Goethe on their lips. Financial transactions were carried out in the shadow of Schiller-quotations”]. Eisler’s *Faustus*

⁶⁹⁹ *Die Zeit*, Nr. 13, 26.3.1965, Archiv des BStU, Büro der Leitung, Nr. 117 Band 2, Mfs HAXX Nr. 10177, Sign. 234.

does not work against Socialism itself or as formalist play for its own sake, however harsh the rebukes from the Akademie der Künste on these grounds, but rather as a Brechtian negative example played out on unstable theatrical ground. This opera that was never sung reflects the transitional state of postwar Germany more accurately than East German ideologues were willing to accept.

CHAPTER 4

HÖLDERLIN BETWEEN THE LINES: EISLER'S *ERNSTE GESÄNGE*

The old words have blood on them.

*But here, under the blackened sun, there are things, in the
trammeled, the ruined, the old words, which must still be said.*

Ellen Hinsey, "Interdiction"

Introduction

Even as the post-Zhdanov thaw occurred in the Soviet Union, allowing Shostakovich's once-banned violin concerto to be performed in 1955⁷⁰⁰ (also following the death of Stalin in 1953), Hanns Eisler's fall from favor in the German Democratic Republic haunted him until the end of his life in 1962. He became a target of surveillance in the Stasi's formative years. Back in Berlin after a time of reckoning in Vienna, following the violently crushed workers' protests of 1953 and his own humiliation at the Akademie der Künste, Eisler found himself on difficult personal ground as well. He and his wife Lou separated in 1953; though he later formed a fruitful partnership with the pianist Steffy Wolfs, he struggled with depression and alcoholism. During this decade Eisler did continue to compose, in collaboration with Brecht and Johannes Becher. His 1955 film score for Alain Resnais' controversial Holocaust documentary *Nuit et brouillard*

⁷⁰⁰ See Isaak Glikman, ed. and Anthony Phillips, trans., *Story of a Friendship: The Letters of Dmitry Shostakovich to Isaak Glikman 1941-1975* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 61-62.

(*Night and Fog* or *Nacht und Nebel*, with the German translation by poet Paul Celan) borrowed from his own earlier music under pressure of a deadline, but won the Jean Vigo Prize for film music. In 1956, Eisler set texts by Kurt Tucholsky, a satirist in the Heinrich Heine tradition who had been active in the Weimar Republic and committed suicide in Swedish exile in 1935. Like many of Eisler's projects in the 1950s, these settings expose discrepancies between utopian ideology and reality; they are parodic but employ more simple caricature⁷⁰¹ than the grotesquerie of his earlier Heine settings.

Eisler faced two more crises in 1956. Nikita Khrushchev's deeply divisive "Secret Speech" to the 20th Communist Party Congress in Moscow leaked quickly to the press, exposing Stalin's purges of the 1930s three years after the Soviet leader's death. In East Berlin, his statue on the monumental Stalinallee was removed during the night, and, though Khrushchev's speech was mainly meant to bolster his own power, many loyal Communists were forced to reckon with the human costs of Marxist thought turned rigid ideology. Eisler himself was disturbed by this turn of events; it remains unclear how much he or other East Berliners really knew about earlier totalitarian horrors in the Soviet Union.⁷⁰² Gerd Rienäcker points out that "Eisler und Brecht waren kritische, aber überzeugte Leninisten" ["Eisler and Brecht were critical, yet convinced Leninists"] and that recent efforts to pin down their positions on Stalin too exactly miss the mark.⁷⁰³ The second blow for Eisler was the death of Brecht on August 14, 1956. In the midst of rehearsals for two of his plays, including *Das Leben des Galilei* at the Berliner Ensemble, Brecht suffered a fatal heart attack. Several days earlier, when Eisler knew his friend was ill, he had written to him, "Vergiß nicht. Du bist unersetzbar! Du weißt, wer unersetzbar ist hat auf sich so

⁷⁰¹ See Wißmann, 213-214.

⁷⁰² Ibid. 211.

⁷⁰³ Gerd Rienäcker, personal correspondence, 21 January 2015.

lange aufzupassen bis er ersetzbar ist. Vorläufig ist das nicht in Sicht”⁷⁰⁴ [“Don’t forget! You are irreplaceable. You know that someone irreplaceable has to look after himself until he is replaceable. At the moment this is not in sight”].

Eisler suffered heart problems of his own in the following years, combined with his depression and heavy drinking. He was under surveillance in the Stasi’s formative years, for his support of dissident artists and defectors as well as for his difficult-to-pin-down ideological stance. One report from February 1958 puts it this way: “Bei Eisler handelt es sich um einen Parteilosen, der in seinem bisherigen künstlerischen Schaffen sich zur Sache der Arbeiterklasse bekannte. In Diskussionen über weltanschauliche Probleme ist er jedoch sehr zurückhaltend”⁷⁰⁵ [“Eisler’s case is a party-less one; his previous artistic work was committed to the workers’ class, but in discussions of ideological problems, he is very reticent”]. During the last years of his life, he married the pianist Steffy Wolfs, traveled to the Soviet Union, and saw the premiere of his *Deutsche Sinfonie* in Berlin in 1959. His last significant composition before his death in 1962 was a song cycle returning to the poetry of Hölderlin, along with texts by Helmut Richter, Giacomo Leopardi, Berthold Viertel, and Stephan Hermlin. This cycle for baritone and string orchestra also looks back to Brahms’ late *Vier Ernste Gesänge* [*Four Serious Songs*] with the same title, written in anticipatory mourning for Clara Schumann. Like Eisler’s early Heine settings for male chorus, but this time in a very different musical mood, several of these songs demand a light, vulnerable, and potentially strained quality of the male voice.

This chapter provides background on Hölderlin’s reception in postwar Germany, East and West, and examines his texts that Eisler chose or reframed from his earlier cycle of fragments:

⁷⁰⁴ Draft letter, August 1956, Hanns Eisler Archive, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Sign. 6213.

⁷⁰⁵ Archiv der Behörde des Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), Mfs HAXX, Sign. 14247, Bericht 11, 28.2. 1958.

the epigram “Sophokles,” “Mein Eigentum,” “An die Hoffnung,” and “Der Gang aufs Land.” Musical analysis in the following section, with background on the Brahms cycle, shows how Eisler’s late work with Hölderlin treats the text as lyric-to-prose translation, in discursive, centrifugal movement “between the lines” of political events and musical utterance. As in Eisler’s 1940s settings of the poet, the speaker/singer engages in dialogue with other voices. Musical motifs re-encounter their own past in Eisler’s songs and film music of the 1940s and 50s, Hölderlin’s lyric “I” meets twentieth-century poets’ words, and a third or absent presence in the conversation is its audience in future generations. A final cross-reading of the poetry Eisler chose and adapted illuminates the translatability of Hölderlin’s lyric lines into more direct, discursive prose.

Hölderlin’s remnants

Eisler set Hölderlin’s verse for the second time when the poet’s reception still suffered from its Nazi-era appropriation in Germany. The composer was not alone in a desire to re-encounter the poet’s work. Paul Celan’s poem “Tübingen, Jänner” was also written in 1961, reclaiming and breaking down words from Hölderlin’s “Der Rhein”; this effort was part of Celan’s lifelong struggle with Heidegger, who had taken up “Der Rhein” for his own nationalist-poetic cause and whose philosophy the Romanian-Jewish poet also admired. Shortly after, in 1963, Theodor Adorno also wrote against the grain of Heidegger’s Hölderlin, shifting focus from mystical “openness” and fetishized “home” to textual-philosophical parataxis, in his speech of that title. In East Germany, the nationalist, proto-Socialist vision of Hölderlin celebrated by Johannes Becher in 1943 continued to be taken for granted, a vision that culminated in a 1970 speech by GDR cultural ideologue Alexander Abusch in Weimar, honoring the 200th anniversary of the poet’s birth:

In unserer Deutschen Demokratischen Republik wird der visionäre Traum des Jakobinischen Dichters durch die wissenschaftlich begründete, revolutionäre Tat vollzogen: die Einheit von Friedrich Hölderlin und Karl Marx als Produkt der Dialektik der Geschichte.⁷⁰⁶

[In our German Democratic Republic, the visionary dream of the Jacobin poet will be realized through the intellectually founded revolutionary act: the union of Friedrich Hölderlin and Karl Marx as the product of the dialectic of history.]

Abusch alludes here to Thomas Mann's 1927 essay "Kultur und Sozialismus": "Ich sagte, gut werde es erst stehen um Deutschland ... wenn Karl Marx den Friedrich Hölderlin gelesen haben werde"⁷⁰⁷ ["I said, it will be good for Germany ... if Karl Marx will have read Friedrich Hölderlin"]. Hanns Eisler's intention, while still in 1940s exile, to reclaim the "Jacobin" Hölderlin was widely realized in the GDR, though after the Prague Spring movement was violently crushed in 1968, East German poets tended to draw on the more idiosyncratically nonconformist aspects of the poet's life and work.⁷⁰⁸ Volker Braun's poetry of the 1960s and 70s makes sophisticated use of Hölderlin allusion and citation, in interplay with the voices of Brecht, Goethe, and others;⁷⁰⁹ Stephan Hermlin's 1970 radio play *Scardanelli* includes anonymous

⁷⁰⁶ Alexander Abusch, "Hölderlins poetischer Traum einer neuen Menschengemeinschaft," cited in Ruth J. Owen, *The Poet's Role: Lyric Responses to German Unification by Poets from the GDR* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 40. See also Gunter Schandera, "Zur Resistenz bildungsbürgerlicher Semantik in der DDR der fünfziger und sechziger Jahre," in Georg Bollenbeck, ed., *Traditionsanspruch und Traditionsbruch. Die deutsche Kunst und ihre diktatorischen Sachwalter* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002), 167-168.

⁷⁰⁷ Thomas Mann, *Essays*, Vol. 3, ed. Hermann Kurzke and Stephan Stachorski (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994), 63.

⁷⁰⁸ Owen, 40.

⁷⁰⁹ Axel Goodbody, "The Romantic Landscape in Recent GDR Poetry: Wulf Kirsten and Volker Braun," in Howard Gaskill, Karin McPherson, and Andrew Barker, eds., *Neue Ansichten: The Reception of Romanticism in the Literature of the GDR* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), 191.

voices riffing on questions raised by Hölderlin's poetry,⁷¹⁰ another case of improvisational polyphony rather than one-voiced ideology; and dissident singer Wolf Biermann's 1972 song "Das Hölderlin-Lied" identifies with an estrangement attributed to the poet, playing on his dialectic of "das Eigene und das Fremde":⁷¹¹ "In diesem Land leben wir/ wie Fremdlinge im eigenen Haus"⁷¹² ["In this country we live/ like foreigners in our own house"].

Eisler's second Hölderlin project predates most of this boundary-testing work and is more concerned with encounter *at* an edge or threshold. He was composing his *Ernste Gesänge* in 1961, as the Berlin Wall was cemented into place, an effort he supported despite his own disappointments in the Soviet and East German states. In a parodic response to an open letter by Günter Grass in August 1961, Eisler defended the building of the Wall as a necessary measure, in light of insufficient reckoning with the Nazi past in the West and in judgment of "gefährliche Hetze gegen die DDR" ["dangerous rabble-rousing against the GDR"]. He cited Jean Paul's novel *Flegeljahre* to critique the West's illusory materialism and play on Grass' name ("Denn in der Nacht sehen die Blumen alle wie Gras aus" ["Since all the flowers look like grass at night"]), as he voiced the need for serious ["ernsthaft"] debate on questions of freedom and democracy, rather than open letters that protect their writers from difficult conversations.⁷¹³ Eisler expressed this desire for intimate seriousness even in the title of his last dialogic project,

⁷¹⁰ See Gerd Labrousse and Jos Hoogeveen, eds., *DDR-Roman und Literaturgesellschaft* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981), 236-237.

⁷¹¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, Brief an Casimir von Böhlendorff, 4. December 1801, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Frankfurter Ausgabe, ed. D. E. Sattler (Frankfurt and Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 2007), 492-93.

⁷¹² Wolf Biermann, *Alle Lieder* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1991), 198.

⁷¹³ Hanns Eisler, open letter to Günter Grass, in *Die Weltbühne*, XVI, Nr. 35, 30 August 1961, 1096. See also Eisler, *Musik und Politik. Schriften, 1948-1962*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Series 3, Vol. 2, ed. Günter Mayer (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1982), 475.

the *Ernste Gesänge* in which he sets Hölderlin in dialogue not only with contemporary poets but also with Eisler's own past.⁷¹⁴

The text that opens this cycle is a Hölderlin epigram titled "Sophocles," whose "freudig" ["joyful"] reference echoes the word's repetition in "Gesang des Deutschen," set by Eisler in the 1940s:

Viele versuchten umsonst, das Freudigste freudig zu sagen,
hier spricht endlich es mir, hier in der Trauer sich aus.⁷¹⁵

[Many tried to speak the most joyful, joyfully to no avail,
here it finally speaks out to me, here in sorrow.]

This short text, dated 1799, plays on the word "Trauer" as in "Trauerspiel" or "tragedy."

Hölderlin had already translated several Sophocles tragedies by this time, though his later *Ödipus* and *Antigone* had not yet appeared. The aphorism speaks to "Freude" or "joy" not as a positive affect but rather as the state of fulfillment Hölderlin envisioned in the subsuming of the individual into a greater whole.⁷¹⁶ Like much of the poet's language set in Eisler's *Ernste Gesänge*, this aphorism had been taken up by Heidegger at the height of the Nazi era and still carried resonances of the philosopher's roundabout, quasi-mystical reading. Here is an excerpt from Heidegger's early 1940s lecture on Hölderlin's "Andenken," which includes a section on this epigram:

Das Freudigste in der Trauer? Gestalt und Geschick der "Antigone" sagen genug. Aber gilt auch das Umgekehrte: das Traurigste in der Freude? Vielleicht doch – wenn wir das Traurigste aus dem Leid und dieses aus dem Wesen des Leidens hinreichend wesentlich denken, und wenn wir Freude nicht mit bloßem Vergnügen und der Lustigkeit gleichsetzen. Aber gestehen wir es ruhig ein, daß wir von all dem kaum etwas wissen.

⁷¹⁴ Claudia Albert, *Das schwierige Handwerk des Hoffens: Hanns Eislers "Hollywooder Liederbuch"* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991), 172.

⁷¹⁵ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte* (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005), 221.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Kommentar, 630.

Wir Heutigen gar sind hier so wissenlos, weil wir trotz der Nöte eines zweiten Weltkrieges immer noch nicht die eigentliche Not zu erfahren vermögen, die aber, noch nicht ausgelegt, der Dichter dieses Epigramms vorausgelitten hat.⁷¹⁷

[The most joyful in sorrow? The shape and fate of “Antigone” say enough. But does the reverse also apply: the most sorrowful in joy? Perhaps it does – if we think with sufficient essence of the most sorrowful from within suffering and this from the very essence of suffering, and if we do not compare joy with mere enjoyment or gaiety. Instead we quietly admit that we know hardly anything about all this. We today are so out of our depth because, in spite of the hardships of a second World War, are still not capable of experiencing true hardship that has still not been fully processed, and that the poet of this epigram has already endured.]

Heidegger’s reading suggests a bypassing of actual wartime hardship, or reckoning with that hardship, via ontological “unknowing” and imagined poetic suffering. Hölderlin’s own struggles, both personal and political, are safely blurred in the distant past. Eisler’s choice of this text proves his point to Günter Grass, that the cultural damage done under fascism was not so easily mended, and that Hölderlin’s words were still in need of recovery. Eisler also reclaims the text *as* aphorism, in a short, brittle “Vorspiel und Spruch” or “Prelude and Saying” that opens the song cycle. His choice of this text, rather than an extended lyric utterance, sets that stage for a cycle that translates poetic lines into discursive musical speech. That this introduction announces itself in the title recalls the *Verfremdungseffekt* of Brecht’s placards onstage, naming the action before it happens in order to keep the audience from slipping into narrative suspense. The “contingency and particularity” of the aphorism is striking in that it also carries accumulated historical weight in a “cultural artifact”⁷¹⁸ such as the word “Trauer.” It is also subversive in the same sense that parataxis is, as described by Adorno, in that it disrupts the hierarchical logic of

⁷¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, “Hölderlins Hymne ‘Andenken,’” in Curd Ochwadt, ed., *Gesamtausgabe*, Series II, Vol. 52 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982), 72-73.

⁷¹⁸ J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 356.

subordinate clauses, paradoxically suggesting both musical movement and scriptural prose.⁷¹⁹

Here “Freude” does not result from, depend on, or contradict “Trauer,” but rather appears parallel to it in the very structure of the aphoristic couplet.

Eisler follows this “Vorspiel und Spruch” with a fragment of Hölderlin’s “Mein Eigentum” [“My Possessions”], which he re-titles “Asyl” [“Refuge”]. The source is a draft poem from 1799 that mourns the poet’s separation from Susette Gontard the previous year; the handwritten poem includes a note after the second stanza: “So war’s am Scheidetage”⁷²⁰ [“So it was on the day of parting”]. Like many of Hölderlin’s poems, this one evokes a cyclical agrarian community to which the speaker does not belong, at odds both with this movement of time⁷²¹ and with the human comforts he observes. While the ode’s iambic tendency echoes walking rhythm, its comma breaks and syntax-interrupting enjambments (“viel der frohen/ Mühe” and “es wuchs durch/ Hände des Menschen”⁷²² [“much of the happy/ effort” and “it grew through/ human hands”]), for example) reveal a less steady pace. The speaker oscillates between sorrow at his marginal status and the attempt to find comfort in nature and in song, as a refuge in itself. Eisler breaks the poem after the second stanza (where the poet left his personal note), cutting seven more and shortening two of the remaining six. As in his 1940s Hölderlin fragments, the composer removes references to heavenly powers and personal heaven, as well as a line about a man’s happiness with a faithful wife, and reduces the capital letters to small ones at the

⁷¹⁹ Theodor Adorno, “Parataxis,” in *Noten zur Literatur II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 472.

⁷²⁰ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 631.

⁷²¹ Thomas Pfau, seminar lecture, Duke University, 17 February 2014.

⁷²² Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 222.

beginning each line, “grounding” the world of the poem at the typographical level as well. The remaining fragment reads as follows:

In seiner Fülle ruhet der Herbsttag nun,
geläutert ist die Traub und der Hain ist rot
vom Obst, wenn schon der holden Blüten
manche der Erde zum Danke fielen.

Und rings im Felde, wo ich den Pfad hinaus
den stillen wandle, ist den Zufriedenen
ihr Gut gereift, und viel der frohen
Mühe gewähret der Reichtum ihnen.

Und leuchtest du, o Goldnes, auch mir, und wehst
auch du mir wieder Lüftchen, als segnetest
du eine Freude mir, wie einst, und
irrst, und irrst.

Beglückt, wer am sicheren Herd in rühmlicher Heimat lebt.
Beglückt, wer am sicheren Herd in rühmlicher Heimat lebt.

Doch heute laß mich stille den trauten Pfad
zum Haine gehen, dem golden die Wipfel schmückt
sein sterbend Laub, und kränzt auch mir die
Stirne, ihr holden Erinnerungen.

Und daß mir auch, wie andern, eine bleibende Stätte sei,
sei du, Gesang, mein freundlich Asyl.
Sei du, Gesang, mein freundlich Asyl.⁷²³

[The autumn day now rests in its fullness,
the grape is pure and the orchard red
with fruit, some of the lovely blooms
already fallen to the earth in thanks.

And around the field, where I stroll off the path
in silence, the harvest has ripened
for the satisfied ones, and their happy effort
has yielded them wealth.

You glow, o goldenness, on me as well,
and again blow breezes toward me, as if to bless
me with a joy as once before, and

⁷²³ Hanns Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, in *Lieder und Kantaten*, Vol. 10 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1963), 8-12.

yet you stray, and stray.

Lucky is the one who sits by a safe stove in a worthy homeland.
Lucky is the one who sits by a safe stove in a worthy homeland.

But today let me silently walk the trusted path
to the orchard, whose golden crowns are decorated
with their dying leaves, and crown my brow as well
with lovely memories.

So that I, too, have a resting place like others do,
song, be my friendly refuge.
Song, be my friendly refuge.]

Eisler's autograph score of "Asyl" includes the note "Mexiko City, Berlin 1939-1962,"⁷²⁴ recalling his own lifetime of exile and refuge-seeking, not least in his own German city. At the visual level, the source poem's structure begins to disintegrate in (Eisler's) third stanza, with the shortened fourth line and repetition of "und irrst" ["and strays"]. Eisler changes not only the syntax of this stanza, from a question to a statement, but also turns Hölderlin's positive movement negative, from the speaker's asking if the breeze can "err" toward him as it does toward those who are happy ("und Irrst/ wie um Glückliche, mir am Busen?"⁷²⁵ ["and errs/ as to the happy ones, to my breast?"]), to a sense that the breeze is purposelessly wandering. All that remains of Hölderlin's sixth stanza is a single repeated line, with the word "eigenen" ["own"] changed to "sicheren" ["secure"] in a clearly Socialist move, avoiding the sense of a contented farmer with his own hearth. Eisler's title "Asyl" rather than "Mein Eigentum" underlines this shift away from personal possession. His final stanza emphasizes the refuge of song, removing Hölderlin's favored comforts, images of a blooming garden.⁷²⁶ His removal of exclamation

⁷²⁴ Hanns Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, autograph score, Hanns Eisler Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Sign. 746.

⁷²⁵ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 222.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.* 223.

points after the words “Erinnerungen” [“memories”] and “Asyl” [“refuge”]⁷²⁷ indicates a more understated hope for solace. In this case, though Eisler’s cuts are as dramatic as in his earlier Hölderlin fragments, they seem less about breakage than about toning down the poem’s “Stimmung” and giving it more prosodic weight. Song now appears as the *only* refuge in a landscape where everyone but the speaker seems content. That Hölderlin thought of the word “Gesang” as a direct translation of the Greek “ode,” a form in which he was not ultimately at home, adds a layer of ironic discomfort to this line.⁷²⁸ Politically, the fragment speaks both to Eisler’s Socialist commitment and to his sense of isolation within that system, perhaps not so different from what he had experienced waiting for asylum in the Americas. Re-encountering and destabilizing Hölderlin’s poetry, long appropriated for both right- and left-wing German nationalism, Eisler calls into question the very idea of a “worthy homeland.”

“Asyl” is followed by two non-Hölderlin texts, both explicitly elegiac: “Traurigkeit” [“Sadness”], set to words by the Austrian poet, screenwriter, and director Bertolt Viertel, who had died in 1953, after defending Eisler’s controversial *Faustus* project; and “Verzweiflung” [“Despair”] set to text by the nineteenth-century Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi, who shared with Hölderlin an undertow of pessimism and a sense of marginalization in the modern world. The Viertel poem first appeared in 1936 to mourn Hitler’s ascent to power; Eisler set the text as “Chanson allemande” [“German Song”] after Viertel’s death.⁷²⁹ Like his late recycling of Hölderlin’s “An die Hoffnung,” which follows both of these settings, this choice is a reckoning

⁷²⁷Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 11-12.

⁷²⁸ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 507, with thanks to Thomas Pfau for his perspective on Hölderlin and the ode form.

⁷²⁹ Günter Mayer, publisher’s commentary on Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, trans. Janet and Michael Berridge, Breitkopf & Härtel, <http://www.breitkopf.com/feature/werk/3852>. Web, accessed 23 March 2015.

both with personal loss and with the horrors that Viertel had foreseen and that still haunted both East and West Germany. The text also looks forward, however, in the same way Eisler's 1939 setting of Brecht's three-part elegy "An die Nachgeborenen" ["To Those Who Come After"] speaks to postwar generations. "Wer traurig sein will, wird vielleicht mich lesen,/ und er wird denken zwischen den Zeilen"⁷³⁰ ["Who wants to be sad will perhaps read me/ and will read between the lines"], the poem begins. It goes on to imagine a conversation between the "Mensch der besseren Zeiten"⁷³¹ ["person of better times"] and history itself, foregrounding the dialogic quality of the cycle as a whole, as well as its understated liminality, its "between the lines" message in a state where much communication took coded form.⁷³² Eisler had also set the Leopardi text in the early 1950s, as part of his draft material for *Johannes Faustus*, in a song titled "Faustus Verzweiflung" ["Faustus' Despair"].⁷³³ This choice shows that Eisler's own reckoning with past events, both personal and political, was also still in process. The text's final invocation of the world as the only means of quieting oneself ("beruhige dich") appears to be an answer to "Schmerz und Langeweile ... unser Los und Schmutz"⁷³⁴ ["pain and boredom ... our fate and filth"], though Eisler's music addresses future generations in any voicing of hope. As the composer explained to Hans Bunge at the end of his life, he doubted what an "alter Kommunist" ["an old Communist"] like himself was doing with such a text, which would likely not speak to listeners in his own time in the GDR (a time full of optimism about space flight, as

⁷³⁰ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 13-14.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.* 15.

⁷³² For a semi-autobiographical portrayal of coded communication in East Berlin artistic circles, including the use of the word "Kleist" to signal political-aesthetic dissonance, see Barbara Honigmann, *Bilder von A.* (Munich: Karl Hanser Verlag, 2011).

⁷³³ Mayer, commentary, 1.

⁷³⁴ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 17. See also Wißmann, 220.

Bunge pointed out), but might reach those “die sich in besseren Zeiten um meine Kunst kümmern werden”⁷³⁵ [“who in better times will care for my art”]. Eisler did in fact know why his late songs drew such a dark contrast to the ideology of progress; in the same conversation he said, “Diese Widersprüche liebe ich”⁷³⁶ [“I love these contradictions”]. Once again, as he had in the GDR’s unstable founding years, Eisler showed himself to be more Marxist than the Party Marxists in his lifelong commitment to dialectical theory and practice. He also noted that for “einen alten Hegelianer” [“an old Hegelian”] like himself, he found the contradictions “ein Tonikum, eine Erfrischung”⁷³⁷ [“a tonic, refreshment”].

These two text-settings are followed by an orchestrated version of Eisler’s 1943 “An die Hoffnung,” which foregrounds the poem’s *lack* of hope. Here is the cut version of Hölderlin’s poem, discussed at length in Chapter 2:

O Hoffnung! holde! gütiggeschäftige!
 Die du das Haus der Trauernden nicht verschmähst,
 Und gerne dienend, zwischen
 Sterblichen waltest:

Wo bist du? Wo bist du? wenig lebt' ich; doch atmet kalt
 Mein Abend schon. Und stille, den Schatten gleich,
 Bin ich schon hier; und schon gesanglos
 Schlummert das schauernde Herz.⁷³⁸

[O hope! gracious one busied for good!
 You who do not scorn the house of the sorrowful
 And gladly serving, between
 Mortals presiding:

Where are you? Where are you? I have lived only a little; yet
 My evening already breathes cold. And silent, like the shadows,

⁷³⁵ Bunge, 262-263.

⁷³⁶ Ibid. 264.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Eisler, *Hollywooder Liederbuch*, 59-60, and *Ernste Gesänge*, 19-20.

I am here already, too; and songless
Sleeps my shuddering heart.]

Here the fragment's emphasis on the "gesanglos" and "schaudernde Herz" ["songless" and "shuddering heart"] takes on new personal resonance, considering, as Friederike Wißmann points out in the context of these text-settings, that "[a]m Lebensende ist die Hoffnungslosigkeit die schlimmste aller Seinsformen"⁷³⁹ ["at the end of life, hopelessness is the most terrible state of being"]. This text is followed by "XX. Parteitag," adapted from a short text by East German writer Helmut Richter that reflects directly on the 1956 Communist Party Congress and Khrushchev's "Secret Speech." Eisler headed this song with a note on the need for honesty about recent events.⁷⁴⁰ The poem speaks dialectically against the harsh truths revealed during the Congress, finding reason for hope – less elusive than that in the previous Hölderlin fragment – in an era of greater openness. The text reads as follows:

Ich halte dich in meinem Arm umfangen
Wie ein Saatkorn ist die Hoffnung aufgegangen.
Wird sich nun der Traum erfüllen derer, die ihr Leben gaben
Für das kaum erträumte Glück:
Leben, ohne Angst zu haben.⁷⁴¹

[I hold you clasped in my arm
Like a seed corn hope has risen up.
Now the dream of those who gave their lives
For the hardly-dreamed-of happiness will be fulfilled:
To live without anxiety.]

The last line of the poem relates both to Brecht's "An die Nachgeborenen" (Eisler's change to the phrase "meine kurze Zeit/ Ohne Furcht verbringen" to "ohne Angst verbringen"⁷⁴² ["to spend

⁷³⁹ Wißmann, 220.

⁷⁴⁰ Mayer, commentary, 1.

⁷⁴¹ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 21-22.

my short time without anxiety”]) and to a well-known line in Adorno’s 1951 *Minima Moralia*, describing a utopia “in dem man ohne Angst verscheiden sein kann”⁷⁴³ [“in which one can be different without anxiety”]. The text’s plain-spoken, Brechtian character also works in dialectical encounter with Hölderlin’s lyric sonorities, enacting between the lines the very space for “difference” Adorno had imagined. That this text is followed by another Hölderlin fragment keeps this nineteenth- and twentieth-century dialogue in play.

The final Hölderlin song in Eisler’s cycle is set to fragmented lines from “Der Gang aufs Land” [“The Walk in the Country”], dated 1800. This unfinished poem was intended as an elegy in the formal sense, relying on the distich or elegiac couplet, a line of hexameter followed by a flexible form of pentameter. Thematically, it begins with a gloomy landscape but ultimately celebrates a productive time Hölderlin had enjoyed with his friend Christian Landauer. A “floating” distich, mostly legible on the left margin of the poet’s draft, encapsulates the poem’s oscillation between pleasure and hesitation, song and silence:

Singen wollt ich leichten Gesang, doch nimmer gelingt mirs,
Denn <es> machet mein Glück nimmer die Rede mir <leicht>.⁷⁴⁴

[I wanted to sing an easy song, but I never succeed,
Since my happiness never makes utterance easy for me.]

The poem itself is not broken into stanzas or separate couplets but reads as a thinking-aloud attempt to find language for a moment of belonging in the world. Long lines halted by commas and end-stops qualify the speaker’s sense of his tongue’s being loosed, the word’s being found

⁷⁴² See Bertolt Brecht, *Werke*, Vol. 12, *Gedichte 2* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag and Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), 85, and Eric Bentley and Earl Robinson, eds., *The Brecht-Eisler Song Book* (New York: Oak Publications, 1967), 55.

⁷⁴³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 4 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980), 113.

⁷⁴⁴ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, Kommentar, 711-712.

(“erst unsere Zunge gelöst/ Und gefunden das Wort”⁷⁴⁵), in a fragile and syntactically passive moment. Eisler selects only a few lines from the two-page poem, cutting its more rhapsodic nature images and, as usual, its references to gods and spirits. He also cuts enough shorter words and syllables to truncate the iambic flow, even beyond Hölderlin’s own halting punctuation. Though he does not include the marginal distich, Eisler changes the line “Denn nichts Mächtiges ist, zum Leben aber gehört es”⁷⁴⁶ [For what is not powerful still belongs to life”] to “Denn nicht Mächtiges ist unser Singen”⁷⁴⁷ [“For our singing lacks force, but it belongs to life”], conveying the same caught-in-the-throat quality. Significantly, he leaves off the poem’s final turn toward a hopeful vision of nature, ending on a line that could read like a Brechtian placard. What remains of this long, self-questioning, wandering text is an encounter between wish and resignation:

Komm ins Offene, Freund! Zwar glänzt ein Weniges heute
 nur herunter und eng schließt der Himmel uns ein.
 Trüb ist’s heut, es schlummert die Gäng’ und die Gassen.
 Es scheint, als sei es in der bleiernen Zeit.
 Denn nicht Mächtiges ist unser Singen,
 aber zum Leben gehört es.
 Kommen doch auch der Schwalben
 immer einige doch, ehe der Sommer ins Land.
 Möge der Zimmermann vom Gipfel des Daches den Spruch tun:
 Wir, so gut es gelang, haben das Unsre getan.⁷⁴⁸

[Come into the open, friend! Little shines today
 here below, and the sky closes us tightly in.
 It’s gloomy today, the roads and alleys are sleeping.
 This seems to be a leaden time.
 For our singing lacks force,
 but it belongs to life.
 Still, a few sparrows always come back
 before summer in the country.

⁷⁴⁵ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 276.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁷ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 23.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid. 22-23.

May the builder put this motto on the rooftop:
We have done our part the best we could.]

The poem's first phrase echoes similar lines in Hölderlin's "Brot und Wein" and "Germanien,"⁷⁴⁹ indicating a state of surrender and clarity. Beyond this, "das Offene" carries so much Heideggerian resonance in light of Hölderlin's twentieth-century reception, Eisler's choice inevitably reads as reclamation or intervention. In his studies of both Hölderlin and Rilke, Heidegger had devoted pages (and much corresponding lecture time) to "das Offene" as opening, clearing, and unconcealedness, or truth as "aletheia." In his ongoing concern with dissolving the subject-object border, the philosopher saw such poetic moments as a release from objectification and the false security it provides.⁷⁵⁰ In his long essay "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" ["The Origin of the Artwork"], written in 1935-37 and published in 1950, Heidegger applies such openness to the destiny of a people. Though framed in a larger discussion of "world" and "earth" in their struggle and interdependence, the following line is typical of Heidegger in its self-reflective wordplay and nationalist, even atavistic, appeal to the "essential" path of a people or nation, the word "Volk" politically charged as well: "Die Welt ist die sich öffnende Offenheit der weiten Bahnen der einfachen und wesentlichen Entscheidungen im Geschick eines geschichtlichen Volkes"⁷⁵¹ ["The world is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical nation"]. For Hölderlin, "das Offene" is a subjective occurrence of the individual or between friends, a moment of release from the speaker's usual mode of commentary from society's margins. For Eisler, placing this text after

⁷⁴⁹ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 287, 336.

⁷⁵⁰ See Martin Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 177-122.

⁷⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," in *Gesamtausgabe*, Series I, Vol. 5, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 23.

Richter's "XX. Parteitag" indicates "openness" in a sense belonging neither to the poet nor to Heidegger, that of political transparency. In his 1961 conversation with Hans Bunge, he parses the poem's opening line this way: "Das ist ein sehr schöner Satz, der viel Bedeutung hat. Er würde die Bedeutung haben – in Prosa übersetzt – : 'Reden wir von der Sache!'"⁷⁵²["This is a very beautiful statement with a great deal of meaning. It would mean – translated into prose – 'Let's talk about the thing!'"]. Unlike Eisler's 1943 Hölderlin fragments, which remain strangely faithful to their sources in their broken, alienated voicings, this interpretation disputes not only the poet's Nazi-era reception but also his own worldview. This moment of misreading provides a key to the cycle as a whole, in which Eisler sets Hölderlin's lines so discursively, they sound more like commentary than poetry. On the personal-political level, his addition of the word "Singen" in relation to the text's (now) final line, which brings the "best we could" motto into the open space of a rooftop, makes the text a kind of *ars poetica*, if a very dry one the poet might not have recognized. The text also disavows any Heideggerian invocations of "essence" or "destiny"; the speaker is now a disillusioned artist who has continued to return to his "leadern" homeland and keeps singing what needs to be sung, however weak his voice.

Aside from his baldly political reading of "das Offene," Eisler's commentary on the poem, in his conversations with Hans Bunge, indicates a remaining hope in nature – not in the existentialist-metaphysical vision of Heidegger, but in a universalized, dialectically mediated appreciation of Hölderlin's words. At this late point in his life, Eisler still felt the wounds of Hölderlin's Nazi-era appropriation keenly enough to envision his own response to the poem on a higher plane – if a fraught one that works too hard to reconcile beauty and Marxist perspective:

Meinen sozialen Blick kann ich, auch wenn der Herbst kommt, nicht abschaffen. Er funktioniert auch dorten, er funktioniert als Reflex ... (eines Mannes), dem der

⁷⁵² Bunge, 219.

dialektische Materialismus in Fleisch und Blut übergegangen ist. Der schaut auf eine Blume und findet sie schön und findet auch noch etwas anderes dabei ... Und dann ... ist der Herbst doppelt so schön. Die Blätter sind besser gelb wie für den Metaphysiker. Und die Traurigkeit ist ergreifender als für den Hornochsen, der Religiosität betreibt, und das Verfallen und auch das Faulen des Herbstes ist eindrucksvoller und nachdenklicher als für den poetischen Dummkopf. Das heißt also, daß für den dialektischen Materialisten die Schönheit der Natur reicher glänzt, ihre Eigentümlichkeit ... weitaus bedeutender ist, ja sich zu einer allgemeinen Lage, zur allgemeinen Empfindung erheben kann. Die Empfindung wird also nicht abgeschafft und ... zu einem kühlen Denke heruntergeschraubt. Sondern im Gegenteil: Der Herbst blüht mir viel prächtiger wie für den Metaphysiker ...⁷⁵³

[I cannot put aside my social gaze, even when autumn comes. It functions out there, too, it works as the reflex ... (of a man) for whom dialectical materialism lives in flesh and blood. He looks at a flower and finds it beautiful, and finds something else there, too ... And then ... the autumn is doubly beautiful. The leaves are a better yellow than for the metaphysician. And sadness is more gripping than for the stupid ass, carried away by religion, and the falling leaves and even the decay of autumn is more impressive and contemplative than for the poetic fool. This also means that for the dialectical materialist, the beauty of nature gleams more richly, in its particularity ... by far more meaningful, than can soar into general perception, into common sentiment. Sentiment is therefore not abandoned and ... toned down to cool thought. Rather, the opposite: autumn flourishes more splendidly for me than for the metaphysician ...]

The strain of holding such tensions becomes apparent in Eisler's score. As the following analysis will show, Eisler's musical setting of "Komm ins Offene" foregrounds the baritone voice in its most difficult reach, echoing his early Heine choruses in their treatment of masculine vulnerability. At the same time, the voice sings in the discursive mode that dominates the cycle. Eisler scored this music with Ernst Busch in mind, a "singing actor" known for his Brechtian, gestic utterance on the threshold of speech and song.⁷⁵⁴ Here Hölderlin's lyric "I" takes in the beauty of nature from a distance, exposing its evocation in words that are mere words, more a wish for appreciation than the act itself.

⁷⁵³ Ibid., 221-223.

⁷⁵⁴ See Lowry, 127-128.

The song cycle concludes with an epilogue set to text by the East German poet Stephan Hermlin. Like Eisler, the German-Jewish Hermlin had spent the war years in exile and became close to the composer in late-1950s Berlin. During the 1960s Hermlin became active in an Akademie der Künste poetry circle that supported Wolf Biermann and quickly became suspect by Party officials. His poem set by Eisler is an elegy for Johannes Becher, who had died in 1958.⁷⁵⁵ It evokes an autumn landscape and concludes with a line about what will bloom without the poor or hungry one in the future:

Neues wächst aber fort, so wie die Zeit es will,
Die ist des Darbens müd. Ihn aber ruft es weit.
Was auch ohne ihn blüht,
Preist er künftigen Glückes gewiß.⁷⁵⁶

[But the new grows and is gone, as time will have it,
Making the needy one tired. Yet calling him onward.
Even what blooms without him
He surely praises as future happiness.]

It is not surprising that Eisler's *Ernste Gesänge* were paired with Bach's Cantata No. 82, on accepting the approach of death, in a 2009 concert in Cologne with baritone Matthias Goerne; Hanns Hotter's 1951 recording of the Bach cantata with Brahms' *Vier ernste Gesänge* set a precedent for such a pairing. The program notes for the 2009 concert explicitly link this autumnal sadness to the end of a Communist era after Khrushchev's 1956 revelations.⁷⁵⁷

Threshold music

Albrecht Betz describes the character of Eisler's *Ernste Gesänge* as that "eines Vermächtnisses" ["of a bequest"] that also recalls the late songs of Schubert, namely the bleak

⁷⁵⁵ Wißmann, 221.

⁷⁵⁶ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 26.

⁷⁵⁷ Andreas Günther, program notes, Kölner Philharmonie, Sonntagskonzerte 5, 10 May 2009, 10.

Winterreise.⁷⁵⁸ As a whole, the cycle looks forward to future generations even as it re-inscribes past poetry and draws on nineteenth-century Lieder. Though Hanns Eisler's late songs are not a formal parody of Brahms' *Vier ernste Gesänge* (much of Eisler's music had been composed earlier), the cycle does reflect back on its genre model in its discursive vocal scoring and melancholy "Stimmung." During Eisler's study with Schoenberg, Brahms had been one of his primary models in learning harmony and counterpoint.⁷⁵⁹ *Vier ernste Gesänge* draws on biblical texts, mainly from Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament and 1 Corinthians in the New, to meditate on the transience of life, the bitterness of death, and the hope for wholeness in heavenly love. Brahms composed his cycle in Vienna in spring 1896, between hearing the news that Clara Schumann had suffered a stroke and mourning her death several months later. The cycle is scored for bass and piano but has also been transposed for high voice. While drawing on nineteenth-century Lieder conventions, the music is idiosyncratic and demanding in ways that anticipate Eisler's compositional approach: a wide vocal range, fragments of the Baroque "step of sorrow" passacaglia in pedal point, rhythmic irregularities such as a 9/4 passage that concludes the first song, and extremes of loud and soft.⁷⁶⁰ Unlike the vocal lines in many of Brahms' earlier songs, the sung passages in this cycle tend toward syllabic, even dry discourse, with short excursions into lyric flow. Brahms' choice of predominantly prose texts from the Bible likely influenced Eisler's discursive scoring. His cycle also recalls Brahms' voicing of

⁷⁵⁸ Betz, Albrecht, *Hanns Eisler: Musik einer Zeit, die sich eben bildet* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1976), 206, 211.

⁷⁵⁹ See Wißmann, 61.

⁷⁶⁰ See Johannes Brahms, *Vier ernste Gesänge*, in *Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27), 44-61.

private grief; Eisler's music requires similar upper-range dexterity and vulnerability of the male voice, but with an added political dimension.

Eisler outlined his cycle in cyclical affective terms: "Besinnung – Überlegung – Depression – Aufschwung – und wieder Besinnung"⁷⁶¹ ["Reflection – Deliberation – Depression – Revival– and again Reflection"]. This arc and return also reads in prose or novelistic terms, as a journey plotted in stages of "Stimmung." The *Ernste Gesänge* cycle begins with the one-page "Vorspiel und Spruch," marked at the very slow "largo" tempo,⁷⁶² accompanied by string quartet. The intimacy of this scoring recalls nineteenth-century chamber music, in which each part works in conversation with the others. The strings enter one by one in a fugue-like pattern, with the cello and second violin echoing one similar line and the viola and violin another. As I have noted with regard to Eisler's Goethe settings, drawing on Bakhtin, the use of fugue form is a means of scattering rather than gathering voices, a centri-*fugal* musical discourse that refuses one-voiced utterance in favor of a plural, multivalent sound-world.⁷⁶³ Except for a sudden forte-piano marking in the first violin, this two-line prelude remains pianissimo, with each voice wandering in a loosely twelve-tone trajectory. The overall "Stimmung" is hushed and ominous.

Eisler's vocal writing in this opening "movement" recalls his early Heine choruses in its exaggerated meter and extreme vocal range. An abrupt shift from 4/4 to 6/4 time breaks the strings' marchlike or walking beat and signals the voice's entrance, at a slightly faster "andante"

⁷⁶¹ See Betz, 207.

⁷⁶² Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 7.

⁷⁶³ See M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 270-273 and Jørgen Bruhn, "Bakhtin og kulturen," manuscript, 2015, 22-23.

tempo.⁷⁶⁴ This metrical change allows the music to imitate speech rhythm, while at the same time drawing attention to Hölderlin’s meter, in a tension between prose and poetic form. On the words “Viele versuchten umsonst” [“Many tried to no avail”], the baritone breaks into the string quartet’s lush and quiet dissonance with a loud, high triplet.⁷⁶⁵ His line, heavily doubled in the strings, continues in this metric pattern and exaggerates the dactyls in Hölderlin’s text.

Fig. 4.1

The image shows a musical score for a Baritone and a string quartet. The Baritone part is in a 6/4 time signature, marked 'Andante (ca. 68)'. It features a triplet of notes on the words 'Vie-le ver-such-ten umsonst, das Freudig-ste freu-dig zu sa-gen, h'. The string quartet parts (Gn., Br., Vcl., Kb.) are marked 'Tutti' and 'f'. The score is in a 6/4 time signature and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

With one note per syllable, this vocal line does not allow for melismatic reflection but sounds percussive and even angry in its leaps and pressurized high notes. The last line, “hier spricht endlich es mir, hier in der Trauer sich aus” [“here it finally speaks out to me, here in sorrow”], ends on a B-natural followed by heavily accented D’s in the strings.⁷⁶⁶ In traditional tonal music, this cadence would sound comfortably like a minor third, or the top half of a major triad. Like several endings in Eisler’s 1940s Hölderlin cycle, however, this one sounds harmonically unresolved, due to the E-flat and A-flat tone-field that has immediately preceded it. That the

⁷⁶⁴ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 7.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

singer's final bar is a rest with fermata raises several questions: what has happened between the quiet string prelude and the baritone outburst? And what, in the end, is not being said? This is musical text "with a loophole," again in Bakhtin's terms, as "the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words," in language intertwined with other voices.⁷⁶⁷

Within this polyphonic sound-space, and already at the song cycle's outset, dialectical contrast leaves much to read between the lines. In preparation for the premiere, Eisler specifically asked baritone Günther Leib to avoid his customary expressive emphasis and hold back, singing this music "als wenn Sie's aus dem Baedeker vorlesen"⁷⁶⁸ ["as if you were reading out loud from the Baedeker"]. Hölderlin's verse is thus "translated" into prose not only in the dry, syllabic vocal writing, but also explicitly in the composer's interpretive advice. True to his suspicion of sentimentality, Eisler insisted that this cycle was meant to engage critical thought even in its evocation of sorrow, with the voice at a distance from its material. Eisler liked to quote Hegel as an antidote to music that could too easily sound empty, paradoxically finding more truth of expression in distance:

Das bloße Sichselbstempfinden der Seele und das tönende Spiel des Sichvernehmens ist zuletzt als bloße Stimmung zu allgemein und abstrakt und läuft Gefahr, sich nicht nur von der näheren Bezeichnung des im Text ausgesprochenen Inhalts zu entfernen, sondern auch überhaupt leer und trivial zu werden.⁷⁶⁹

[Mere self-sensitivity of the soul and the sounding play of self-examination is in the end, as mere mood, too common and abstract, and it presents the danger, not only of removing

⁷⁶⁷ See M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Kindle Edition), location 5724.

⁷⁶⁸ See Wißmann, 217.

⁷⁶⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, "Die begleitende Musik," in *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, cited in Hanns Eisler, *Lieder für die Singstimme*, in *Gesammelte Werke* Series, I, Vol. 16, ed. Manfred Grabs (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1976), 7.

a closer denotation of the text's expressed content, but also of becoming generally empty and trivial.]

This opening song sets the tone for a cycle that operates in dialogue between generally legato, melancholic string music and a dry human voice, as poetry becomes commentary, implying more than expressing its richer sonorities.

The “Vorspiel and Spruch” is followed by a strophic setting of Hölderlin’s “Asyl.” Each verse begins without prelude, after an eighth rest in 4/4 time, as if the voice has been interrupted mid-thought and then continues. The vocal line tends toward speech-rhythm scoring that alternates between one-syllable-per-eighth-note duple meter and triplets, with some irregular meters interspersed, creating an overall sense of run-on – and depending on interpretation, even muttered – reportage. Frequent turns and grace notes add a nervous quality to these vocal lines; as musical ornaments, they also come across as misplaced relics of an older sound-world, the nineteenth-century *Liederabend* in sentimentalized form. Here Eisler reifies a musical signal in order to expose its very reification, a homeopathic technique often used by Brecht as well.⁷⁷⁰ The turns and grace notes in the vocal line appear so close together, they necessarily draw attention to themselves: **Fig. 4.2**



The string orchestra supports the voice with sustained, minimal chords as the text is “reported,” filling in the singer’s gaps with scalar passages recalling Baroque fugue. This music is hardly evocative of a ripe autumn landscape; it calls attention to Hölderlin’s words *as* poetic language, largely emptied of its atmospheric resonance, just as the grace notes now sound like

⁷⁷⁰ See Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), 169.

calcified ornaments. On the repeated phrase “Beglückt, wer am sicheren Herd in rühmlicher Heimat lebt” [“Lucky is the one who sits by a safe stove in a worthy homeland”], the score instructs the singer to utter these words more slowly, in triple pianissimo, not legato, and – according to a footnote – “Gesang äußerst leise, mit größter Diskretion wie eine Litanei” [“Voice extremely quiet, with the greatest discretion, as in a litany”].⁷⁷¹ The phrase’s second utterance is marked even more quietly. Eisler’s comparison of this almost-whispered passage to a litany (a poetic form with repeated anaphora or opening phrase, common in biblical texts) suggests a secular invocation. Sounding between verses and “between the lines” of poetic-text-as-commentary, this phrase allows the voice to speak vulnerability through, and not despite, a “Stimmung” of quiet discretion. This musical mood, amid the empty remnants of sentimental ornamentation, speaks most accurately to the speaker/singer’s sense of isolation.

The end of “Asyl” is marked by several lyrical phrases in which the voice is allowed more than one note per syllable. Eisler takes this new melismatic mode even further, scoring the phrase “sei du, Gesang, mein freundlich Asyl” [“song, be my friendly refuge”] as a distinctly Lied-like, even Schubertian passage with a hunting horn trope in its final descending third.⁷⁷² Because this line follows several verses of dry, discursive writing for the voice, it seems to come out of nowhere. Eisler may be drawing attention to what he called “Melodiefetischismus” [“melody fetishism”], and thus exposing what listeners may assume is “natural” diatonic movement as a socially conditioned construct,⁷⁷³ though such baldly tonal writing may also indicate a lack of energy under the pressures and disappointments of his late years. The song’s

⁷⁷¹ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 10.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.* 12.

⁷⁷³ See Eisler and Adorno, *Composing for the Films*, 27-28, and Günter Mayer, *Weltbild—Notenbild. Zur Dialektik des musikalischen Materials* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1978), 157.

lyric elements are now more full than empty; the eighth-note triplet on the word “Gesang” is not a mere decorative turn but is intrinsic to the melody. As in the final, dissonant piano chords that interrupt lyric accumulation in his 1943 “An eine Stadt,” this song ends with a sudden break meant to estrange what has come before – and yet may not succeed. This dry, pizzicato scale in the violas, which take up the vocal ornaments and break off, leaves echoes of earlier lyricism in the air. The song’s final bar gives the ever-pianissimo cellos and basses an F-minor chord suddenly marked 3/4 time, extending the 2/4 line by one beat and suggesting, as an afterthought, a waltz. Eisler’s note “Mexiko City-Berlin 1939-1961” underlines this final, almost deadly, quiet bar, giving it more narrative than musical resonance as it recalls the composer’s liminal period in Mexico while awaiting his American visa.⁷⁷⁴ **Fig. 4.3**

⁷⁷⁴ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 12.

Like the cycle's opening "Vorspiel und Spruch," Eisler's setting of Viertel's "Traurigkeit" ["Sorrow"] opens with a slow, fugue-like pattern in the strings. The cello line inverts the violin subject preceding it, a case of formal play recalling Eisler's early 1950s Goethe settings; that this song was composed in 1955, shortly after the *Johannes Faustus* controversy, indicates Eisler's unwillingness to give up his "formalist" leanings. This centrifugal pattern continues to unfold the cycle's plural, novelistic shape as well. A solo violin "sings" a twelve-tone-inflected, pianissimo melody, followed by the baritone's entrance marked "freundlich – leicht" ["friendly – light"].⁷⁷⁵ A sense of gentle storytelling pervades the song, creating a sense of elegiac distance. The baritone line begins in E major and plays on the straightforwardly songlike quality of the major third, landing securely in A major on the words "zwischen den Zeilen" ["between the lines"]; the strings bend immediately into A minor, answering with typically Eislerian dialectics, and exposing major-minor tonality as yet another construct.⁷⁷⁶ To hear the stakes in Viertel's poem, written against the rise of Nazism in the 1930s, is indeed to "denken zwischen den Zeilen"⁷⁷⁷ ["read between the lines"] of this ostensibly cheerful melody. Like the final vocal passage in "Asyl," the phrase "Mensch der besseren Zeiten"⁷⁷⁸ ["person of better times"] opens into a more lyric, melismatic melody, repeating the word "Mensch" on high notes that signal vulnerability and – depending on the singer – perhaps strain as well (see **Fig. 4.4** below). If this music was meant for a singer-actor like Ernst Busch, sustaining a phrase in a high, transitional register would certainly stretch the voice to a difficult limit.

⁷⁷⁵ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 13.

⁷⁷⁶ See Hanns Eisler, "Arnold Schönberg," in *Materialen zu einer Dialektik der Musik*, ed. Manfred Grabs (Leipzig: Reclam, 1976), 238.

⁷⁷⁷ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 13-14.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 15.

Fig. 4.4



This belated setting of a 1936 poem, which addresses future listeners, begs the question of whether these are really better times, in 1955 or 1961. The brief and mournful violin solo at the beginning of the song may reveal more than the human voice does.

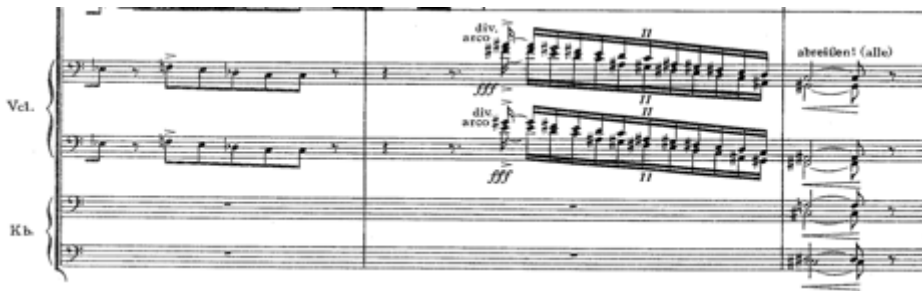
In the next song, “Verzweiflung” [“Despair”], set to text by Leopardi, Eisler changes the cycle’s “Stimmung” entirely. Though the strings begin with another fugue-like prelude, it is marked “Treibend” [“Driving”] this time, with fortissimo pizzicato in all voices and a furious, descending violin glissando that introduces the singer’s line.⁷⁷⁹ The baritone sings as discursively here as in the earlier songs, but with urgent pacing, sudden shifts into irregular meter, continuing glissandi, intense bridge-fingering, and accented pizzicato passages in the strings. His lines take on a run-on character, with no pause for breath, let alone line-break or caesura, between phrases. Here in the middle of the cycle, Eisler leaves singer and listener very little room between the lines. Syntactically, his text-setting reads and sounds like a pile-up of “Seufzer,” “Erde,” “Schmerz,” “Langeweile,” “Schmutz,” and “die Welt”⁷⁸⁰ [“sighs,” “earth,” “pain,” “boredom,” “filth,” and “the world”] rather than a logical parsing of hopeless sighs, the human fate of pain and boredom, and the world itself as the only source of rest. Though, as in the other songs, the voice is allowed slightly broader phrasing in its final line, a poem that might provide a simple answer to suffering is refused that possibility. At the end of the song, the celli crash down the

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid. 16.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid. 17-18.

scale in thirds, landing on a tone cluster that Eisler marks “abreißen! (alle)”⁷⁸¹ [“tear off! (all)”].

Fig. 4.5



Only in this final bar does the music break off long enough to offer a space for critical reflection, between “Despair” and the next song, ostensibly a call toward hope.

Eisler’s orchestration of his earlier “An die Hoffnung” complicates the 1943 song. For conducting ease, Eisler adds time signatures to the originally unmetered music; the song now reads in 4/4, 5/4, 3/4, and 2/4 time. His scoring for string orchestra rather than piano opens it out into an even more novelistic, plural space than the intimate sonority of the Lied. Legato string passages, rather than the more percussive keyboard texture, create a strong contrast to the jittery syllabic vocal line. The strings’ shrieking upward glissando and sudden pizzicato lines underscore the alienation of the singer’s “Wo bist du? Wo bist du?” moment.⁷⁸² **Fig. 4.6a, b**



⁷⁸¹ Ibid. 18.

⁷⁸² Ibid. 19.

The orchestra's loud, heavily accented postlude now evokes collective strife among strong individual voices, with their own discernible melodic fragments, rather than a single percussive explosion. At the text's breaking point, where Eisler cuts Hölderlin's remaining hope *for* actual hope, human and non-human voices collide and accelerate in shuddering protest. The cycle as a whole has accumulated both density and intensity to this point, with "Verzweiflung" and "An die Hoffnung" paired at its center.

The next song, "XX. Parteitag," is a musical space "between the lines" in itself. Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" is not named but evoked without words. Marked "col legno," with the stick of the bow striking the strings, the first and second violins play repeated eighth notes on an F and G respectively, a dissonant interval of a major second. Because no two bows will strike the strings in exactly the same place, the resulting sound is not unison but slightly pitch-ambivalent. This dry, nervous scoring continues, almost like overheard speech, or if played strictly in time, like the tapping of Morse code, as the singer enters in waltz rhythm marked, dialectically, "leise, ohne Sentimentalität" ["quietly, without sentimentality"].⁷⁸³

Fig. 4.7

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and instrumental piece. At the top, the tempo is marked "Andante" and the mood is "leise, ohne Sentimentalität". The vocal line is for Baritone, written in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are "Ich hal - te dich in mei - nem Arm um -". The instrumental parts are for two Violins (Geigen), written in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. Both violin parts are marked "col legno" and "p". The score consists of four measures.

With added viola and cello texture mimicking the violins' "tapping" line, the singer reports syllabically in 4/4 and 2/4 time until, as in the earlier songs, the vocal line opens slightly into

⁷⁸³ Ibid. 21.

longer passages on the “Leben, ohne Angst zu haben” repetition, once again in 3/4 time.⁷⁸⁴

“Between the lines” of the cycle as a whole, this song names collective disappointment in the Communist past only in its title. The text itself speaks to the possibility of hope “with a loophole,”⁷⁸⁵ the orchestra’s ambivalent, percussive voices evoking “Angst” amid the singer’s attempt at a waltz. The song ends abruptly, as if the singer has been cut off amid tapping strings.

This short, liminal song is followed by Eisler’s setting of Hölderlin’s “Der Gang aufs Land,” re-titled “Komm ins Offene, Freund!” Eisler borrows from his own work here, music scored for the British film *So Well Remembered*,⁷⁸⁶ a 1946-47 project set at the end of the war and featuring a male character looking back over the dark misfortunes of his life. The “Stimmung” of this music is that of gentle movement and wandering thought, with passages in variable duple-triple meter. Strangely, considering Eisler’s translation/misreading of the poem’s opening line as “Let’s talk about the thing,”⁷⁸⁷ the music evokes as much vulnerability as directness. The vocal tessitura repeatedly lifts to the potentially uncomfortable upper passaggio, or transition point on the E and F above middle C. Singing quiet, sustained passages in that range can easily give the voice a strained quality. In addition, it makes the image of “das Offene” less comforting, a space of more risk than relief. Though this song is not parodic grotesquerie, like Eisler’s early Heine choruses, it does demand similar reach and exposure of the male voice, suggesting vulnerability even in the distanced, reportage-style vocal lines. Hans Bunge’s

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid. 22.

⁷⁸⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (Kindle Edition), location 5724.

⁷⁸⁶ Wißmann, 221.

⁷⁸⁷ Bunge, 219.

assumption, when discussing this song with Eisler, that it was written for tenor⁷⁸⁸ indicates the range it requires of a baritone. The post-World War I culture of “coolness,”⁷⁸⁹ problematized in Eisler’s 1925 Heine choruses, resurfaced after 1945 in the sober lines of East Berlin architecture and the language of Socialist realism, echoing the earlier “Neue Sachlichkeit” movement; Eisler’s singer-commentator seems to take a similar stance, and yet, as usual, the situation is more complicated. Sometimes doubling the strings and sometimes singing in counter-melody, the baritone line also conveys the “unser Singen” [“our singing”] plurality indicated in the text.⁷⁹⁰ Oscillating between triadic and chromatic passages, the melody mirrors the text’s reference to provisional, hesitant, or even helpless voices. The singer’s line remains painfully high and quiet on the final motto: “Wir, so gut es gelang, haben das Unsre getan”⁷⁹¹ [“We have done our part the best we could”]. The song ends with descending violin octaves marked “ohne Ausdruck, leer”⁷⁹² [“without expression, empty”]. **Fig. 4.8**

The image shows a musical score for a song. The top staff is for Baritone, with lyrics: "Wir, so gut es gelang, haben das Unsre getan." Below it are staves for Violin I (Ggn. 1), Violin II (Ggn. 2), Trombone (Br.), Violin (Vel.), and Cello/Double Bass (Kb.). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'pizz' (pizzicato). There is a performance instruction 'I. Ggn. ohne Ausdruck, leer' above the Violin I staff.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid. 263.

⁷⁸⁹ See Helmut Lethen, *Cool conduct: the culture of distance in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁷⁹⁰ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 23.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid. 24.

⁷⁹² Ibid.

This “open” ending is hardly redemptive, as a Heideggerian reading of Hölderlin’s “Offene” might suggest. Between these lines – between the strings’ dry octaves – is just empty space. Eisler has reclaimed his poet once again, but this time in an attitude of “neither-nor,” more “loophole” than language itself.

The song cycle’s epilogue, set to the ostensibly hopeful text by Stephan Hermlin, draws on music from another 1940s film, *None but the Lonely Heart* (1944),⁷⁹³ which also features Tchaikovsky’s famous song of that title. Another dark film focused on a male character’s damaged life, this project stars Cary Grant cast against type and explores a post-World War I cityscape of poverty, illness, and crime. Though Eisler’s epilogue begins in the discursive mode of the rest of the cycle, it breaks into lyrical sway evoking both the 1944 film and the “schöner Klang”⁷⁹⁴ (the “beautiful sound” associated with nineteenth-century Romanticism) that Eisler’s earlier Hölderlin settings absorb in order to disturb. An extended cinematic passage gathers the melodic impulses that have collected at the ends of the previous songs, in a momentary centripetal, not centrifugal, illusion of completeness and familiarity. Here again, however, Eisler is using musical material – in the form of reified melody⁷⁹⁵ – to expose its own contingency. The song interrupts itself, when the voice declaims Hermlin’s text loudly and repeatedly, on the final word “gewiß”⁷⁹⁶ [“surely”], as if calling out into the space left open by the previous song. The orchestra completes the cycle with a restatement of the film-music melody; but instead of reaching a satisfying closed cadence, the strings break off with an almost trivial-sounding

⁷⁹³ Wißmann, 221.

⁷⁹⁴ See Ernst Bloch and Hanns Eisler, “Die Kunst zu Erben,” in Hans-Jürgen Schmitt, ed., *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 258-259.

⁷⁹⁵ See Eisler and Adorno, *Composing for the Films*, 27-28.

⁷⁹⁶ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 26.

pizzicato – not unlike the too-quick ending of Eisler’s 1943 Hölderlin cycle, perhaps another case of aesthetic charisma still too “hot” to the touch.

Cross-reading and conclusion

Hanns Eisler’s return to Hölderlin at the end of his life came partly as an effort to continue the work of postwar reckoning – in a second reclaiming of the poet’s texts after his Nazi-era appropriation, particularly by Heidegger – and partly as a means of addressing personal loss. The composer’s last years were haunted by his fall from favor in East Berlin following his attempt to compose a *Faustus* opera, the death of Brecht in 1956, and the disillusionment following Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” that had revealed Stalinist atrocities. Recycling material from his wartime songs and film music, as well as several settings of texts by East German poets in the 1950s, Eisler created a novelistic sound-world in which singer and string orchestra encounter each other, diverge, and leave much unsaid. What remains of Hölderlin’s texts draws attention to itself not as lyricism but as translated prose, voiced in a dry and even brittle tone. Fugue form in the orchestra scatters the music outward in musically literal “centrifugal” motion,⁷⁹⁷ refusing to support a single or easily fixed meaning in the text. An accumulation of musical density at the song cycle’s center releases outward in the final songs, which leave empty spaces between voices and words. The baritone voice is stretched to its upper register-change in the last Hölderlin song, a voice at its breaking point after what sounds like years of attempting to sing what needed to be sung. If, as Albrecht Betz and Claudia Albert have argued, the cycle achieves a precarious balance of sorrow and hope,⁷⁹⁸ that hope is voiced for a better world *after* this prosaic-elegiac voice has passed away.

⁷⁹⁷ Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 270-273.

⁷⁹⁸ See Betz, 207 and Albert, 173.

In addition to this quality of poetry-to-prose translation, the cycle as a whole conveys a sense of absence – not so much of the speaker himself, as in Eisler’s 1940s “ghost” settings of Hölderlin, but in the addressing of a third person beyond voice and orchestra, an implied receiver. This absent presence could be “die Nachgeborenen”⁷⁹⁹ [“those born after”], in Brecht’s words and in Betz’s sense of “bequest.”⁸⁰⁰ Perhaps the cycle also addresses Brecht himself. Eisler considered the poet’s absence in the cycle to be a failure on his part, which he could not adequately explain.⁸⁰¹ To quote Bakhtin on such elusive conversation partners:

Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are omitted, but in such a way that the general sense is not at all violated. The second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker.⁸⁰²

Brecht’s methods of estrangement – sudden song-like passages amid dry reportage, reified sound-ornaments, a motto that draws attention to itself – are certainly felt throughout the cycle. As Brecht himself put it in his 1949 “Kleines Organon für das Theater” essay,

Wir brauchen Theater, das nicht nur Empfindungen, Einblicke, und Impulse ermöglicht, die das jeweilige historische Feld der menschlichen Beziehungen erlaubt, auf dem die Handlungen jeweils stattfinden, sondern das Gedanken und Gefühle verwendet und erzeugt, die bei der Veränderung des Feldes selbst eine Rolle spielen.⁸⁰³

[We need theater that not only makes possible feelings, insights, and impulses already allowed by the prevailing historical field of human relationships, in which the actions of

⁷⁹⁹ Bertolt Brecht, *Gedichte 2*, vol. 12 of *Werke* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), 85.

⁸⁰⁰ Betz, 206.

⁸⁰¹ Bunge, 262.

⁸⁰² Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Kindle locations 4965-4967. Jørgen Bruhn has pointed out that Bakhtin developed the related, and somewhat difficult, idea of the “superaddressee” briefly in his late notes. Comment on this chapter, 3 June 2015.

⁸⁰³ Bertolt Brecht, “Kleines Organon für das Theater,” in Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei, and Klaus-Detlef Müller, ed., *Bertolt Brecht, Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, Vol. 23, Schriften 3 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), 79.

the time take place, but rather uses and incites feelings and thoughts that themselves play a role in changing that field.]

In the *Ernste Gesänge*, the affective associations called up by Eisler's briefly lyrical passages do not last long enough to accumulate trance-inducing power, exposing its danger as they do in his earlier Hölderlin settings. Instead, they come across as artifacts of poetic form broken into prose, showing how much the cultural field has changed, by necessity, since the pre-Nazi period.

Reading Hölderlin's texts with Eisler's late settings in mind, several stages of translation-distance become apparent. First, language-gestures such as "Komm ins Offene, Freund!"⁸⁰⁴ ["Come into the open, friend!"] sound back through their adaptation more *as* gesture ("Reden wir von der Sache!"⁸⁰⁵ ["Let us talk about the thing!"]) than as lyric utterance. In his 1975 Eisler study, which attempts to rescue the composer from accusations of "reactionary" aesthetics, Károly Csipák goes so far as to call it a mistake to assume Eisler's songs should be "sung" at all. He refutes the idea that the text is mere commentary working dialectically against the music, however, and holds that as "gestlichen Kompositionen" ["gestic compositions"], Eisler's songs open the potential for both critically distant and emotionally engaged interpretation.⁸⁰⁶ Csipák uses the word "übersetzt" ["translated"] to describe Eisler's musical voicing of Brechtian distancing and musical attractiveness in the *Ernste Gesänge*,⁸⁰⁷ this cycle does convey a double distance, first in its prosaic treatment of Hölderlin, and second in its musical "Verfremdungseffekte." A third degree of distance becomes apparent when cross-reading

⁸⁰⁴ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 276.

⁸⁰⁵ Bunge, 219.

⁸⁰⁶ Károly Csipák, *Probleme der Volkstümlichkeit bei Hanns Eisler* (Munich: Musikverlag Emil Katzwichler, 1975), 217-218.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 241.

Hölderlin through this lens: the poet's own "translation" of Greek meter into German. The Alcaic meter of "An die Hoffnung" and the elegiac couplets in "Der Gang aufs Land" may have proven Friedrich Schlegel's point that such metric forms could be "imitated" effectively in German,⁸⁰⁸ but the process still leaves a great distance between the quantitative and qualitative syllabic measure of Greek and German, respectively, and between the "clicking"⁸⁰⁹ sound of Homer and the glottal-stopped, alliterative, internally rhyming German lines of Hölderlin. When re-framed in Eisler's discursive vocal scoring, the texts begin to sound passed on and changed with each telling, as third-hand speech instead of immediate lyric utterance.

Eisler's adaptations also give Hölderlin a belated quality, beyond the at-odds-with-time stance of many of the poems' speakers. Drawing on his own past music and evoking 1940s film scores, Eisler's cycle carries nineteenth-century language through remembered twentieth-century sound. Even present-tense lines such "Kommen doch auch der Schwalben/ immer einige noch, ehe der Sommer ins Land"⁸¹⁰ ["Still, a few sparrows always come back/ before summer in the country," in Eisler's shortened version] are elegiac twice removed, missing the "segensbringenden"⁸¹¹ ["beneficent"] modifier of "Schwalben" in the source poem and sounding like a century-long memory. The language is exhausted, spoken as dry commentary, interrupted by a few half-hearted lyric turns. Any remaining poetic sonority echoes in the orchestral space around them and between the lines. Bakhtin notes a similar phenomenon in Dostoevsky:

⁸⁰⁸ See Jason Geary, *The Politics of Appropriation: German Romantic Music and the Ancient Greek Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 26.

⁸⁰⁹ Thanks to Gabriel Trop for this descriptive term, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 9 April 2013.

⁸¹⁰ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 22-23.

⁸¹¹ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte*, 276.

All this is interwoven with the deliberately dull thread of informative documentary discourse, the ends and beginnings of which are difficult to catch; but even this dry documentary discourse registers the bright reflections or dense shadows of nearby utterances, and this gives it as well a peculiar and ambiguous tone.⁸¹²

Ultimately, even the orchestral space is “ohne Ausdruck, leer”⁸¹³ [“without expression, empty”] in the violins’ open octaves that conclude the final Hölderlin song. The cycle’s epilogue, in its “Stimmung” of remembered cinematic lyricism, foregrounds this dynamic of emptiness and echo. Eisler has reclaimed Hölderlin from nationalist appropriations on the right and left, leaving him nowhere, with language that no longer carries mythic or salvific resonance in itself. Shortly after Eisler’s death in 1962, Theodor Adorno took a similar approach to this remaining Hölderlin and foregrounds his word-constellations with their own dignity *as* language in his “Parataxis” speech of 1963. In the same decade, Celan applied Hölderlin’s caesuras and hesitations in his own breaking of what he experienced as a tainted German language. Not only this, but Celan took Heidegger personally to task for his refusal to speak a word of regret or apology for his support of Nazism.⁸¹⁴ Eisler’s compositional approach to tainted cultural material is also interventionist, but as an act of protecting lyric material in prose form, not as a personal-poetic confrontation. He described it this way to Hans Bunge at the end of his life, with Hölderlin’s fragile texts in mind: “Die Aufgabe der Musik ist es, solche poetische Gedanken und Bilder wie eine Fliege im Bernstein zu bewahren – sonst sind sie weg”⁸¹⁵ [“Music’s task is to preserve such poetic thoughts and images like a fly in amber – or else they are gone”].

⁸¹² Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Kindle locations 5082-5084.

⁸¹³ Eisler, *Ernste Gesänge*, 24.

⁸¹⁴ For a detailed account of Celan’s fraught poetic and personal response to Heidegger, see Werner Hamacher, “Wasen: On Celan’s ‘Todtnauberg,’” trans. Heidi Hart, in *The Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, Vol. 57, 2011, 15-54.

⁸¹⁵ Bunge, 219.

CONCLUSION

Contrary Voices has critically examined the poetry of Heinrich Heine, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as set to music by Hanns Eisler from 1925 to 1962. These text-settings intervene in the ideologically fraught reception of the poets' works, particularly under Nazism and in the first decades of the German Democratic Republic. In each case, the composer radically fragments the poems, which his music shapes through parody, dissonance, irruption, and musical tropes for lament. With the publication of a new edition of Eisler's collective works, and in light of his ongoing re-appraisal after the Cold War, an interdisciplinary study that gives text and music equal weight reveals a form of adaptation in which Eisler's fragmented texts are often more faithful to their sources than were ideologically rigid readings, whether on the right or left, throughout his lifetime. Eisler's treatment of canonical musical materials (e.g. the songs of Robert Schumann, a composer whose music was heavily appropriated under fascism) also works as interventionist adaptation, often as formal parody with a dissonant cast. In light of Chantal Mouffe's approach to art in the "agonistic" public sphere,⁸¹⁶ this project has shown that in resistance to fixed ideological positions, Eisler's music is intrinsically democratic in its polyphony, voicing contrasts and tensions within his own creative process as a committed Socialist until his death in East Berlin.

My musical readings have shown that Eisler both draws on and plays against the charisma of nineteenth-century harmony and melodic sway, in order to expose their potential for

⁸¹⁶ Chantal Mouffe, "Art and Democracy: Art as an Agonistic Intervention in Public Space," in *Art as a Public Issue*, No. 14, 2008, 12

exploitation in the body politic. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's approach to polyphony and centrifugal movement in Dostoevsky, my project has shown how Eisler's multi-voiced text-settings also work against the pull toward univocal ideology, whether under National Socialism or East German cultural politics. In each chapter, a dialogic cross-reading of text and music has illuminated less obvious aspects of the poetry, e.g. a strain of melancholy in Heine's 1840s send-ups of revolutionary-nationalistic zeal, heightened fragility and even discursiveness in Hölderlin's odes, and polyphonic simultaneity that counters what is usually read as linear or organic progression in Goethe. Eisler's own difficult position as a politically committed and formally experimental composer becomes particularly obvious in close readings of his canonical text settings. Modernist techniques such as montage create jarring contrasts and (in the case of Eisler's Goethe settings) kaleidoscopic effects. Though Eisler underwent serious censure in the German Democratic Republic for his "formalism," the interplay of parody and montage in his text-settings underpins rather than undermines his Marxist commitments. At the same time, his use of lyric charisma to expose its own reification often leans so far into this "schöner Klang," the music risks the very pleasure it resists.

The chronological approach in *Contrary Voices* has introduced Eisler's works in historical-political context, in a narrative arc based on critical years in his life. Eisler's choruses set to lines by Heinrich Heine in the mid-1920s work in a dialectic of parody and lament, as multiple voices speak to the Weimar Republic's fragile blend of postwar trauma, aesthetic experimentation, nationalist uprising, and post-revolutionary disillusionment. The composer's California-exile settings of Hölderlin during the Second World War intervene in the poet's quasi-mystical appropriation under Nazism, by breaking the texts, changing their titles, and both exposing and unsettling their potential to cast a lyric spell. This dissertation has also investigated

Eisler's polyphonic and even playful Goethe settings composed in the early years of the German Democratic Republic, works that led East Berlin cultural officials to criticize Eisler for formalist tendencies and eventually prevent him from composing his *Johannes Faustus* opera in the early 1950s. Eisler's late Hölderlin settings (1961-62) in the wake of Brecht's death and the 20th Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev denounced the Stalinist cult, reflect an accumulation of personal and political disillusionment in their dry, discursive tone and editorial markings that indicate an "empty" instrumental quality. Each chapter has provided background on the poets' reception histories in light of political appropriation, for example Goebbels' position as honorary patron of the Hölderlin Society founded in 1943 and the Goethe celebration linked to the birth of the GDR in 1949.

My methodology in *Contrary Voices* has drawn on a number of theoretical frameworks. As noted above, a dialogic approach to adaptation encourages two-way readings of nineteenth-century German poetry as broken down and reimaged in Eisler's music. As Theodor Adorno made clear, a work of art can serve as a kind of container for older materials, but history has disarticulated these materials to the point that they cannot be reinstated into their former "Gestalt" and must be heard or read differently.⁸¹⁷ My study of the dynamics between text and music is also grounded in phenomenology, taking into account my own experience with Eisler's Hölderlin songs as a practicing musician and voice teacher, noting the demands on vocal range and the frequency of tempo markings for acceleration, for example. This empirical analysis relates to an additional concern in *Contrary Voices*, the relationship of voice and gender, particularly with regard to politicized models of masculinity that break down in the Heine choruses and become dry and discursive in his late songs for baritone. Eisler's treatment of voice as non-gender or register-specific in his 1940s Hölderlin settings is a special case, perhaps

⁸¹⁷ See Theodor W. Adorno, "Nachtmusik," in *Moments musicaux* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1964).

reflecting an open or emptied identity in exile. My project has also investigated ideologically charged notions of the feminine that emerge in Eisler's Goethe settings; his 1949 *Rhapsodie* folds various voices and genders from *Faust II* into a single soprano body, complicating her position as "the" voice for an emerging postwar state. In addition to my adaptation-studies, phenomenological, and gender-studies approaches in this project, I have applied specific forms of dialectical inquiry. In the Heine choruses, parodic grotesquerie and musical tropes for lament work in active opposition, encouraging Brechtian critique in performers and listeners, while at the same time opening an element of melancholy in the texts.⁸¹⁸ In Eisler's 1940s Hölderlin songs, a more Hegelian synthesis occurs, in which dissonance and irruption are gradually "aufgehoben," or subsumed, into lyric accumulation, which breaks off in an unsettling jazz chord change at the end of the song cycle.

Contrary Voices has drawn not only on established theoretical approaches but also on modes of expression with critical potential. The project has traced manifestations of "Stimmung," a tone or mood that does not simply evoke emotion but reveals the human costs of the crisis-points in which Eisler composed. I have also considered elegiac expression at the level of content and musical rather than specifically poetic form, as an aesthetic mode that can evoke distance as well as sorrow. Eisler's use of the Baroque "step of sorrow" in his early Heine settings, combined with the keening quality of the male chorus, expose the human costs of violent nationalist impulses. In his Hölderlin songs, Eisler amplifies the already elegiac, distanced quality of many of his source texts (and of the nineteenth-century Lieder he parodies) to create a ghostly sound-world. How much critical response the listener brings to his or her

⁸¹⁸ See Aurin, 56-61.

experience of Eisler's music is of course an open question. The music's agonistic relationship to its own beauty may provide enough discomfort, at least, to lead listeners to wonder why this is.

Eisler's settings of older "Kulturgut" highlight modernity's own discomfort with aesthetic charisma, or the "gift" in Jean-Luc Marion's sense of something received and not made.⁸¹⁹ Rather than avoiding such charisma, Eisler's music tends to draw it close and undermine it, in order to expose its kinetic, affective, and politically exploitable power. How much authorial intention directed this play with and against musical charisma, and how much emerged during Eisler's creative process, is another open question. As Adorno notes in his *Ästhetische Theorie*,

Jedes Werk ist ein Kraftfeld auch in seinem Verhältnis zum Stil, selbst noch in der Moderne, hinter deren Rücken sich ja gerade dort, wo sie dem Stilwillen absagte, unter dem Zwang des Durchbildens etwas wie Stil konstituierte.⁸²⁰

[Every work is a force field, even in its relation to style, and this continues to be the case in modernism, where, unbeknownst to modernism and precisely there, where it renounced all will to style, something resembling style formed under the pressure of the immanent elaboration of works.]⁸²¹

Adorno goes on to note that within this pressurized force-field of sound that yields style, even in spite of itself, artworks can expose socio-political untruth:

Die gesellschaftlichen kritischen Zonen der Kunstwerke sind die, wo es wehtut; wo an ihrem Ausdruck geschichtlich bestimmt die Unwahrheit des gesellschaftlichen Zustands zutage kommt.⁸²²

⁸¹⁹ See Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

⁸²⁰ Theodor Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970.), 307.

⁸²¹ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 206.

⁸²² Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 353.

The socially critical zones of artworks are those where it hurts; where in their expression, historically determined, the untruth of the social situation comes to light.⁸²³

The tendency of Eisler's music to leak lyric charisma beyond exposure of its fetishistic readings, and to voice human vulnerability in an ostensibly Marxist project, indicates the precarious ground on which a modernist-socialist composer found himself. As Richard Taruskin has noted in his study of Shostakovich's subjection to conformist censure in the Soviet Union, "The fact is, no one owns the meaning of this music, which has always supported (nay invited; nay compelled) multiple opportunistic and contradictory readings, and no one can ever own it."⁸²⁴ In Eisler's case, the music is so richly polyphonic and sometimes painfully beautiful, even strictly Marxist readings prove difficult. The places "where it hurts" are precisely those meant to expose the listener's complicity in expecting beauty, and they leave him or her wanting more. In this sense, Eisler's project of estrangement meets the same, but even stranger, end as Brecht's characters like Mutter Courage, intended to serve as negative examples but somehow, in many productions, becoming more and more appealing as their stage presence persists.

This material slippage in Eisler's work may be one reason its reception has been as fraught, even in his own lifetime, as that of the nineteenth-century poets whose words he adapted. In his parodic voicing of nationalist bluster, unsettling treatments of Hölderlin's one-dimensionally appropriated "Vaterland," and polyphonic play with the cultural iconicity of such figures as Goethe and Bach, Hanns Eisler struck one painful political nerve after another throughout his life. That he was punished for his music under National Socialism, American McCarthyism, and even East German cultural policy attests not only to his refusal to voice ideologically univocal positions, but also to music's capacity to destabilize even the composer's

⁸²³ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 237.

⁸²⁴ Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 276.

own political intentions. Eisler's songs presented in this project combine activism with affect in a critical way, drawing performers and listeners even further into the music's charisma than a strictly Marxist or Brechtian dialectical project would suggest. These works also speak to the continued relevance of nineteenth-century poetry, in the richness of its multiple, intermedial, and politically charged adaptations over the last century.

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