

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

**THE PLEBISCITE OF THE CONSUMERS:
HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER AND CULTURAL POPULISM**

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ABSTRACT

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By Alasdair James King

Enzensberger's works have been, for more than forty years, a provocative commentary on and of the post-war period. This thesis uses an interdisciplinary framework drawn from Germanistik and British cultural studies to present a critical, historical account of Enzensberger's cultural politics, particularly concerning popular culture and the role of the critical intellectual in the maintenance of democracy. It argues that much of Enzensberger's writing, particularly his critical essays but also his poetry and his practices as an editor, analyses and, on occasion, intervenes to alter, the shifting relationship between economic and political structures in the Federal Republic and the operations of the 'cultural economy', the processes of making meaning and constructing social identities. What informs his writing throughout is his enduring commitment to the promotion of a democratic political culture. Although he starts from a position influenced by Adorno, where the masses are seen to be victims of the nexus of the culture industries and the political conservatism prevalent in the 1950s, there are also hints in his work of a more populist approach to the politics of popular culture. After formulating an emancipatory theory of the media based on their interactive capacity in 1970, his work assumes that the cultural practices and symbolic exchanges of ordinary people are able to challenge in productive ways the attempts of the culture industries and the political elites in Germany to incorporate them into a repressive version of capitalism. Enzensberger's increasingly populist cultural politics become explicit in his later essays with his advocacy of limited strategic political interventions by ordinary people rather than by intellectuals. Enzensberger's populism culminates in his controversial defence of the thriving, democratic political culture in the Federal Republic created by the affluent Kleinbürger.

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Über die Schwierigkeiten der Umerziehung

Einfach vortrefflich

All diese großen Pläne:

das Goldene Zeitalter

das Reich Gottes auf Erden

das Absterben des Staates.

Durchaus einleuchtend.

Wenn nur die Leute nicht wären!

Immer und überall stören die Leute.

Alles bringen sie durcheinander.

Wenn es um die Befreiung der Menschheit geht

laufen sie zum Friseur.

Statt begeistert hinter der Vorhut herzutrippeln

sagen sie: Jetzt wär ein Bier gut.

Statt um die gerechte Sache

kämpfen sie mit Krampfadern und mit Masern.

Im entscheidenden Augenblick

suchen sie einen Briefkasten oder ein Bett.

Kurz bevor das Millenium anbricht

Kochen sie Windeln.

An den Leuten scheitert eben alles.

Mit denen ist kein Staat zu machen.

Ein Sack Flöhe ist nichts dagegen.

Kleinbürgerliches Schwanken!

Konsum-Idioten!

Überreste der Vergangenheit!

Man kann sie doch nicht alle umbringen!

Man kann doch nicht den ganzen Tag auf sie einreden!

Ja wenn die Leute nicht wären
dann sähe die Sache schon anders aus.

Ja wenn die Leute nicht wären
dann gings rückzuck.

Ja wenn die Leute nicht wären
ja dann!

(Dann möchte auch ich hier nicht weiter stören.)

Hans Magnus Enzensberger¹

¹ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Gedichte 1955-1970, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1971, pp. 128-29.

INTRODUCTION

Like those of his contemporaries Günter Grass and Martin Walser, the writings of Hans Magnus Enzensberger (b. 1929) have been, for more than forty years, a provocative commentary on and of the post-war period. He is a poet, essayist and cultural critic of international standing, and is also acclaimed as an editor and translator. His work has accompanied the development of the Federal Republic of Germany from the 1950s to the 1990s, his criticisms and polemics causing controversy at frequent intervals and arousing hostility on occasion from figures on both the right and the left in Germany's political culture.

For such a major figure in German literary and intellectual life, there are few book-length studies or theses devoted to his writings. Those scholars and critics who do attempt to engage with his work prefer to examine his writings in the form of articles, the number of which now runs well into four figures.¹ However, this scholarly interest has not been translated into a significant number of academic theses² or into substantial pieces of research. Of the small number of book-length studies of Enzensberger's work, only Frank Dietschreit and Barbara Heinze-Dietschreit's introductory study in the *Sammlung Metzler* series attempted to give an overview both of the breadth of Enzensberger's interests and of developments in his work over four decades up to the

¹ See Alfred Estermann, 'Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Eine Bibliographie', in Reinhold Grimm (ed.), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1984, pp. 394-435.

² Amongst the most prominent theses on Enzensberger are Arthur Zimmermann, Hans Magnus Enzensberger: die Gedichte und ihre literaturkritische Rezeption, Bouvier, Bonn, 1977, Bärbel Gutzat, Bewußtseinsinhalte kritischer Lyrik. Eine Analyse der ersten drei Gedichtbände von Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, Wiesbaden, 1977, Ingrid Eggers, Veränderungen des Literaturbegriffs im Werk von Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main/Bern, 1981, Holger-Heinrich Preuß, Der politische Literat Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main/Bern, 1989, and Kristin Schmidt, Poesie als Mausoleum der Geschichte. Zur Aufhebung der Geschichte in der Lyrik Hans Magnus Enzensbergers, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main/Bern, 1989. Of this group of researchers, only Eggers and Preuß go some way to considering Enzensberger's work as an essayist. Their theses cannot, however, take into account Enzensberger's most recent collections (even Preuß ends his study with work published originally in the early 1980s) which are central to my argument.

mid-1980s when it first appeared.³ The other main studies of the author, and there are no more than a handful of them, are collections of essays on aspects of Enzensberger's work rather than lengthy, single-authored monographs.⁴ Research published on Enzensberger is, then, fragmentary and partial: there are numerous excellent readings of individual poems and poetry volumes, occasional pieces on his political or cultural criticism, but few sustained attempts to examine Enzensberger's overall importance.

There are several reasons for this situation. Enzensberger is clearly a difficult writer to get to grips with and not just because of the cerebral nature of much of his more recent poetry or the breadth of reference which can be found in many of his essays on German politics and culture. The daunting number of publications which Enzensberger can now claim is obviously a hurdle for any researcher, but similarly prolific and allusive authors (W.H. Auden or Thomas Mann come immediately to mind) are far better served in terms of overall critical assessments. There is quite possibly something in the nature of Enzensberger's work which has hindered the kind of sustained analysis which other writers of comparable stature receive as a matter of course.

The problems researchers face who try to provide a concise overview of Enzensberger's themes and ideas are not simply caused by the writer's prolific output. It is notoriously difficult to try to attribute to him a stable position or ideological perspective on any issue as his statements often seem to be contradictory. Anyone attempting to engage with this body of writing will come fairly quickly across Peter Weiss's celebrated evaluation of Enzensberger: 'also doch irgendwo eine stabile Größe - warum nur weiß

³ Frank Dietschreit and Barbara Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Sammlung Metzler (Band 223), J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Stuttgart, 1986. As the date of publication indicates, this admirable book is unable to take into account Enzensberger's poetry and essays published over the last decade.

⁴ There are five useful collections on Enzensberger's work: Joachim Schickel (ed.), Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1970, Reinhold Grimm, Texturen. Essays und anderes zu Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Bern, 1984, Reinhold Grimm (ed.), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1984, Heinz Ludwig Arnold (ed.) Text und Kritik. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 49, Munich, 1985, and Hinrich Siefkin and J. H. Reid (eds.), 'Lektüre - ein anarchischer Akt' - a Nottingham symposium with Hans Magnus Enzensberger, University of Nottingham Monographs in the Humanities: VI, Nottingham, 1990.

man nie, wo man ihn hat?'⁵ This statement is normally understood to refer to Enzensberger's theoretical and political inconsistency and is echoed by many scholars daunted by what they perceive as his frequent apparent changes of position. K. Stuart Parkes calls him 'the will o' the wisp' and recounts how staff at the Marbach Literary Archive described him as a 'chameleon' and hinted at sympathy with anyone attempting to pin him down.⁶ More recently Philip Brady has noted how Enzensberger's critics in Germany have made repeated reference to his purported evasions and inconsistencies.⁷

But Weiss's statement can be taken in another way, one which is ultimately of more significance in both understanding Enzensberger and in understanding why it has evidently proved so difficult for scholars to come to terms with this large and significant body of work. Enzensberger is difficult to pin down, not just because he appears to change position with alarming regularity - although I will contend that even this assumption is based on a distorted interpretation of his project - but because of the disciplinary demands made on researchers trying to follow his range of interests across German and comparative literature, politics, media studies and cultural theory. In trying to classify him as a writer, the nature of his concerns forces one to place him not alongside, say, Erich Fried or Günter Eich as a poet with a political conscience; instead, with each new volume of essays on the media and culture in Germany, he demands to be considered as an important participant in a tradition of debates on culture and contemporary society initiated in Weimar Germany and in exile by Siegfried Kracauer, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht. While the importance of several of Enzensberger's essays to cultural sociologists and to researchers in cultural studies has been noted by critics such as Stanley Aronowitz, Jean Baudrillard, Jürgen Habermas and Angela McRobbie, the sociological implications of much of Enzensberger's cultural criticism have been largely ignored by literary critics in the Federal Republic and

⁵ Peter Weiss, 'Aus den Notizbüchern', in Grimm (ed.), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 104.

⁶ K. Stuart Parkes, 'Hans Magnus Enzensberger - The Will O' The Wisp', Writers and Politics in West Germany, Croom Helm, London/Sydney, 1986, p. 182.

⁷ Philip Brady, 'Watermarks on the Titanic: Hans Magnus Enzensberger's Defence of Poesy', Proceedings of the English Goethe Society, 1987/88, 58, p. 3.

Britain. Enzensberger's ability to work successfully in more than one discipline, his capacity to produce work of importance not just in German literature but to contribute to a sociological understanding of contemporary culture in Germany, has contributed to the difficulties that researchers have in evaluating his significance. This is why Peter Weiss's statement is so apt: there is considerable agreement about Enzensberger's high standing as a German writer, but little comprehension of the nature of his overall achievement. Literary scholars have proved reluctant to explore in detail the implications of Enzensberger's cultural criticism, while cultural sociologists have not felt any pressing need to examine his poetry.

This thesis sets out to address this split by arguing that Enzensberger's poetry and his cultural criticism must be seen as part of a coherent cultural project undertaken by Enzensberger over the course of five decades. Enzensberger's career, when viewed in its totality, reveals a consistent and sustained exploration by the author of the relationship between cultural practices and political ideologies in the Federal Republic. What is most interesting about Enzensberger's work, and what separates him from other post-war literary intellectuals interested in the connections between German politics and culture, is his attention to the entire range of cultural practices, including popular phenomena such as television viewing, tourism and consumption, as well as to an exploration of the role of literature in society.

This is of the greatest importance for those wishing to understand Enzensberger's overall project as a writer, especially his complex and seemingly contradictory cultural politics. As I will argue below and at length in Chapter One, intellectuals on the left in Germany have been traditionally just as dismissive about the emancipatory possibilities of popular cultural practices as their counterparts on the political right. Enzensberger's critical engagement with popular culture, in contrast, is sustained and nuanced; it has been a key interest throughout his career, from his earliest essays in the 1950s to his analyses of Germany in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, Enzensberger's analysis of the politics of popular cultural practices is not just marginal to his poetry and to his essays on the political culture of Germany but is at the heart of his understanding of the shifting relationship between culture and politics in general and thus informs and shapes

his literary practice. What his analysis of popular culture and its audiences gives Enzensberger is a detailed and concrete map of cultural production and consumption at any given moment in the Federal Republic. This sociology of contemporary cultural practices then informs Enzensberger's strategies as a poet.

In order to evaluate properly Enzensberger's cultural project, it is necessary to draw on a range of disciplinary skills and frameworks. Whereas traditional Germanistik or German literary studies can offer the necessary tools to analyse poetic forms or the use of themes or motifs by Enzensberger, its attachment to the aesthetic qualities of literary production mean that it is of little help in enabling the reader to gain a sophisticated grasp of the implications of other parts of Enzensberger's work. Clearly, any analysis of the complicated relationship between Enzensberger's poetry and its historical context, in the first place, and of his essays on popular culture in the second, will need similar access to the appropriate tools. In this case, the appropriate tools can be found not in literary studies, but in the recent development of the field of cultural studies, where it draws on and synthesises a number of overlapping disciplines, namely sociology, history and media studies, as well as the study of literature.

Although the need for a synthesised approach to the study of contemporary culture has been felt by scholars in literature and the humanities in a number of different countries, it is clear that developments have been much more rapid in Anglophone nations - in Britain, the United States and Australia, particularly - and in Scandinavia, than in the Federal Republic. As Gabriele Kreutzner argued in the late 1980s,

in West Germany there does not seem to be any widely shared conviction that to study contemporary culture in its heterogeneity and diversity is politically and theoretically significant [...].⁸

Although there were excellent initiatives in fields as diverse as Alltagsgeschichte and critical psychology in the Federal Republic at that time, the only firmly institutionalised

⁸ Gabriele Kreutzner, 'On doing cultural studies in West Germany', Cultural Studies, 3, 2, May 1989, p. 241.

academic context for the study of the problems of contemporary culture was the Ludwig-Uhland-Institut für empirische Kulturwissenschaft (LUI) at the University of Tübingen. This, it should be remembered, was at a time when the field of cultural studies was beginning its dramatic rise in a number of universities, polytechnics and art colleges in Britain and other countries. While Kreutzner's analysis neglected to take into account research in film studies in Germany which engaged in parallel debates on the politics of popular cinema and even though her essay has not been updated to examine any developments in the 1990s, it does highlight a very real disparity between the study of culture in Britain and in Germany. The reasons for this disparity are important as they throw considerable light on why it has been so difficult for scholars based in the discipline of Germanistik to analyse fully Enzensberger's contribution to cultural questions and why my subsequent argument has had to, out of necessity, draw on disciplinary frameworks developed in British cultural studies departments rather than in the more traditional setting of Germanistik.

As Kreutzner makes clear, the intellectual traditions in post-war Britain and in Germany have been guided by different models. Much of the most fruitful work in British cultural studies has derived from the concerns which emerged from the work of scholars such as Raymond Williams who challenged dominant concepts of what the study of culture actually entailed. Williams' work in particular attempted to shift the definition of culture from a narrow focus on 'high' culture, on aesthetic and formal questions, to a more anthropological definition of culture as the way that various groups of people make sense of their lives using a variety of practices, activities and symbols. This latter definition would clearly include within its ambit the study of how television or films might be produced and viewed, of participation in leisure activities such as sport and tourism, as well as of the different ways that books might be produced, circulated and read. In all cases, though, Williams was interested in the political and ideological implications of the ways that cultural practices operated at a given moment in a specific society. Kreutzner argues that scholars such as Williams were crucial to the emergence of a new field of analysis in Britain, and cites the lack of a German version of Williams as one of several reasons why Germany has not yet participated in this fruitful area. As my thesis argues, in many respects Enzensberger

shares the range of cultural concerns evinced in Williams' writing and is probably the nearest Germany has to this kind of critical intellectual.⁹

It would be a distortion, though, to suggest that disciplinary fields only originate where there is a dominant intellectual figure to ensure their emergence. It is also necessary to see how different political and cultural forces worked to allow the emergence and success of Williams and others in Britain in the post-war period and those forces which militated against the emergence of such figures and concerns in German intellectual life. Again, it is worth returning to Kreutzner, who argues that at the moment in the mid-1970s and after that Britain was witnessing such lively theoretical discussion over new approaches to the study of contemporary culture, the Federal Republic was experiencing 'a freeze in terms of political and theoretical debates'.¹⁰ Whereas in many British academic establishments there was considerable evaluation and exploitation of various Marxist paradigms taken from Althusser and Gramsci, and subsequently of feminist, post-structuralist and postmodernist approaches, all of which would prove enormously productive and influential in opening up new questions and methodologies in British cultural studies, Kreutzner suggests that cultural theory in Germany, where it existed, was dominated to the relative exclusion of other approaches by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, particularly of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse. As I argue later, this intellectual tradition has not been helpful in opening up for debate 'the theoretical possibility of contradiction and conflict between processes of cultural production and consumption'.¹¹ It is precisely this area, the contradictions and conflicts between cultural production and consumption, which many of Enzensberger's essays explore so effectively and which he examines in relation to shifting political forces and

⁹ A more detailed comparison of the work of Williams with Enzensberger's cultural politics would be highly illuminating and fruitful but is, unfortunately, beyond the parameters of this thesis.

¹⁰ Kreutzner, 'On doing cultural studies in West Germany', p. 243.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 245-246. Kreutzner perceives a 'specific correspondence' between the Frankfurt critical theorists mentioned and the 1968 student movement in the Federal Republic, which she sees 'lying in the parallel between the former's powerful attack on the culture industries and the latter's interpretation of their immediate experiences' at the hands of the German media.

ideologies in the Federal Republic.

There have been several recent attempts to utilise the theoretical insights and frameworks provided by British and American versions of cultural studies to reinvigorate the study of contemporary German culture and to open up areas for discussion which appeared shut off by the Frankfurt model of cultural theory.¹² In his introduction to what is certain to prove a seminal book in the attempt to absorb the gains of cultural studies into the British version of Germanistik or German studies, Rob Burns argues for a new understanding of the relationship between popular culture and society in contemporary Germany, one which would move beyond the narrow Frankfurt School-inspired paradigm:

[...] the capitalist industrialization of culture and communication, highly advanced though it most assuredly is, has itself not been fully realized. Rather, in a way not foreseen by Horkheimer and Adorno, the expansion and diversification of the culture industry opened up spaces in the public sphere where a non-manipulative, even critical employment of the means of cultural communication was possible. In short, culture is the site of critical resistance as well as ideological manipulation.¹³

In order to trace the forms of critical resistance and ideological manipulation in question, Burns proposes a reconciliation of two paradigms in cultural analysis. The first is that derived from the Frankfurt School and centred on the concept of the 'culture industry', which Burns defines as focused on 'a consensus mass culture

¹² See the 'critical postmodernism' of Andreas Huyssen's two collections, After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism, Macmillan Press, London/Basingstoke, 1988 and Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia, Routledge, London, 1995, or Russell A. Berman's Cultural Studies of Modern Germany, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison and London, 1993. See also New German Critique, 'Cultural Studies/Cultural History', 65, Spring/Summer 1995.

¹³ Rob Burns, 'Introduction', in Burns (ed), German Cultural Studies. An Introduction, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 7.

saturated with imposed meaning'.¹⁴ The second paradigm, one which Burns suggests has emerged from British cultural studies and particularly the work of Raymond Williams, which he calls 'culturalism' and defines as placing 'emphasis on cultural practice as constitutive and empowering'¹⁵, is more positive about the capacity for ordinary people to utilise popular culture for their own, sometimes political, ends. This proposed 'reconciliation' of two very different theories necessitates, as Burns quickly points out, both a wider definition of culture along the lines taken by Williams and a much broader definition of politics to include the ways that power can operate in a variety of social relations.

Whilst Burns's essay is useful in suggesting that the Frankfurt School model of cultural theory, with its universal dismissal of the progressive possibilities of popular culture, cannot itself provide a productive framework for the analysis of precisely what it strives to reject, namely those particular moments where the dominance of the 'culture industry' is actually challenged, his desire to 'reconcile' this body of writings with the 'culturalist' strand of British cultural studies work is difficult to fulfil in the form proposed. This is because, despite large variations in emphasis and deep disagreements about particular instances, projects informed by the 'culturalist' paradigm are still firmly indebted to the idea that in the last instance the 'culture industry' cannot determine each and every engagement of its consumers with popular culture and that important forms of political opposition are often revealed in an analysis of cultural practices. The possibility of this kind of cultural politics is exactly what is denied by the Frankfurt School paradigm in the form proposed by Adorno. To reconcile 'culturalism' with the Frankfurt School would mean, in the last instance, rejecting this cornerstone of Frankfurt critical theory.

However, the 'reconciliation' of macro (in the form of the economic and political structures determining cultural production and distribution) and micro (in the form of the actual cultural practices of consumption) approaches to cultural analysis is

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

nevertheless of great importance and is central to much of the field of cultural studies, whether in its neo-Gramscian model centred around the concept of hegemony, in the paradigm proposed by critical political economists of culture or in the work of 'cultural populists' such as John Fiske.¹⁶

Fiske's model is particularly useful for understanding Enzensberger's development from an initial position indebted to Adorno towards a more populist stance. Briefly, Fiske begins with a rejection of the idea that people are helplessly duped and manipulated by capitalist culture industries, although he recognises the power of the culture industries and their continuous attempts to incorporate people as homogenous consumers. However, for Fiske, popular cultural commodities circulate not just in the financial economy, but, and crucially, also in a parallel, related, but ultimately autonomous, 'cultural economy'.¹⁷ It is within the workings of the cultural economy that the consumers of popular culture exchange meanings, derive pleasure and struggle to construct social identities. Clearly Fiske's account, even in its much simplified form here, is an attempt to reconcile an awareness of the workings of the 'culture industry' and the forces of market capitalism with an appreciation of the different forms of resistance practised by ordinary people in their negotiations with cultural products. This position clearly allows far more flexibility and, ultimately, power to the audiences targeted by the culture industries than the classic accounts of the Frankfurt School, though without ignoring the very real inequalities of wealth and power at work in late capitalism. It is precisely the stand off between the financial power held by the culture industries and the creative power (or 'cultural capital') of the consumers which produces the dynamic tension which Enzensberger detects in several of his essays on the relationship between culture and society in the Federal Republic.

¹⁶ For a concise analysis of these related but diverse models, see John Storey, An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1993, pp. 118-123 and 182-200.

¹⁷ John Fiske, Television Culture, Routledge, London, 1987, pp. 309-313. See also Fiske, Understanding Popular Culture, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989, pp. 23-47. Fiske draws heavily in places on the work of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. See Storey, op. cit., pp. 187-190.

Having outlined some of the theoretical models and discussions which inform my analysis of Enzensberger's work, it is now possible to clarify what this thesis sets out to show. My argument, put briefly, is that much of Enzensberger's writing, particularly his critical essays but also much of his poetry and his practices as an editor, analyse and, on occasion, intervene to alter, the shifting relationship between economic and political structures in the Federal Republic of Germany and the operations of the 'cultural economy', the processes of making meaning and of constructing social identities outlined above. Although he appears to start out from a position close to Adorno where the masses in Germany are seen to be victims (often complicit and willing) of the nexus of the culture industries and the political conservatism dominant in the Federal Republic in the 1950s, very early in his writings there are hints of a very different configuration of this relationship. I have called the position which emerges gradually, but, in the period after 1975 unmistakably, that of 'cultural populism'. By this I mean that Enzensberger's work is grounded on his assumption that the cultural practices and symbolic exchanges of ordinary people are, at times, able to challenge in productive and progressive ways the attempts of the culture industries and the political elites in Germany to incorporate them into a repressive version of capitalism.¹⁸ A populist perspective on contemporary society is attractive to Enzensberger in his later writing not least as a means of distancing himself from other critical intellectuals, a group he faults for being out of touch with societal developments and whose radical emancipatory projects often turn into dogmatic and authoritarian attempts to impose an outdated world view on the general public.

Although I have sketched out the theoretical position which informs this analysis, my methodology is ultimately historical and empirical. Using a number of appropriate archives, particularly the collections held by the Schiller-Gesellschaft at the Deutsches-Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar, I have analysed a wide range of publications by Enzensberger, using as far as possible the original publications, from letters and book

¹⁸ My definition is informed by the introductory chapter of Jim McGuigan's Cultural Populism, Routledge, London, 1993, pp. 1-6, especially his general definition of cultural populism as 'the intellectual assumptions, made by some students of popular culture, that the symbolic experiences and practices of ordinary people are more important analytically and politically than Culture with a capital C', *ibid.*, p. 4.

reviews to collected and uncollected poetry and essays, in order to establish developments in his cultural politics. Although I argue that ultimately there is a clear move away from Adorno and towards a more populist position, I have organised each chapter as a snapshot of a specific and discrete temporal moment. I have analysed Enzensberger's work against the background of the political and economic developments in German society at a specific historical point in order fully to make clear his exact conception of the relations between cultural production and consumption at a given moment in the history of the Federal Republic. The importance of historicising his publications has been noted by Enzensberger himself as crucial to a full understanding of their social and political significance:

Die Frage ist eher, in welchem Sog von enormen übergreifenden historischen Kräften wir uns da bewegen. Dann wäre es besser, wenn die Unterhaltung sich eher von mir ab- und den Jahrzehnten zuwenden würde, um die es sich handelt.¹⁹

This critical-historical method enables readers of Enzensberger to see how, despite what appear to be shifts and evasions (which, as I noted above, was a common complaint made by other researchers), there are certain continuities.²⁰ Above all, there is a consistent commitment to promoting the democratic interests of ordinary people in Enzensberger's work and to minimising the possibilities for the authoritarian and repressive operations of economic and political forces on them.

It is important, though, to place Enzensberger's project within the appropriate German critical context, and my opening chapter analyses the theoretical implications of

¹⁹ Enzensberger, in Hanjo Kesting, 'Gespräch mit Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1979)', Grimm (ed.), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 119.

²⁰ 'Was mich nämlich wundert an der Geschichte ist, daß sie so schön eingeteilt ist in Anfang, Mitte, Weiterentwicklung, und vielleicht Ende. Das wundert mich, denn ich glaube, daß wahrscheinlich bei den meisten von uns sich sehr früh gewisse Elemente auskristallisieren, die sich dann immer weiter entwickeln in verschiedene Richtungen, von denen keines ganz verschwindet. Mir ist an den Sachen, die ich gemacht habe, oft post festum eine Kontinuität aufgefallen, von der ich gar nichts ahnte.' See Enzensberger in Kesting, 'Gespräch mit Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1979)', pp. 118-119.

Adorno's position on the 'Kulturindustrie' and Enzensberger's reception of, and relation to, Adorno. In passing, I also compare Enzensberger's writing with another strand in German cultural theory, namely that offered in the Weimar essays of Benjamin and Kracauer, which, in contrast to Adorno's work, perceives the progressive, occasionally utopian, potential contained within popular culture.

My subsequent chapters analyse Enzensberger's work as he moves away from an adherence to Adorno and nearer to more populist models. As I argue in Chapter Two, his earliest poetry and essays on poetics stand in the shadow of Adorno and despair of the possibilities for democratic politics in the Federal Republic, given the reluctance of ordinary people to do anything but blindly consume the products of capitalism along with the conservative policies of Adenauer and Erhard's 'Wirtschaftswunderland'. However, there are noticeable tensions here which become more apparent in Chapter Three where I analyse Enzensberger's essays on politics and popular culture collected in the volume Einzelheiten. In these essays, Enzensberger starts to become torn between an Adorno-derived rejection of contemporary culture and a more optimistic position where he identifies utopian desires at work in popular cultural practices. This tension is evident in the essay 'Das Plebiszit der Verbraucher' from which I have taken the title of my thesis.

The cultural optimism which begins to surface in the Einzelheiten essays is further developed in Enzensberger's work on Kursbuch and, memorably, in his celebrated theory of the media. This work in the latter half of the 1960s is analysed in Chapter Three, where I argue that Enzensberger most clearly rejects an Adorno-derived model of political liberation through aesthetic modernism. Instead, literature retains a place as a limited cultural practice with little political relevance. The media, and in particular television, become for Enzensberger interactive cultural sites with an emancipatory potential, where contemporary political ideologies can be fruitfully contested.

Although many commentators see Enzensberger's work in the 1970s, and particularly his longer sequences Mausoleum and Der Untergang der Titanic, as marking a new phase of cultural pessimism on Enzensberger's behalf, I argue in Chapter Five that this

pessimism is of a very specific kind. Enzensberger certainly doubts the efficacy of utopian cultural projects organised by critical intellectuals at the vanguard of the general population, but his cultural politics do not evince resignation. In contrast, these works continue his populist route in an interesting way as they advocate limited strategic political interventions by ordinary people rather than by intellectuals. The pessimism concerning utopian politics is countered by a commitment to irony, to playfulness and to the importance of pleasure in cultural consumption.

Enzensberger's increasingly populist cultural politics become particularly explicit in his work in the 1980s and early 1990s. In Chapter Six I analyse his defence of the Kleinbürger and of the links he makes between discerning consumption and the maintenance of a democratic politics. This position explicitly rejects the authority of cultural and political elites and all strategies of political liberation based on the leadership of a vanguard of intellectuals claiming to act in the name of the people. It is significant that, despite his reconciliation with popular cultural practices, Enzensberger does not cease to publish poetry during this period. However, as I argue in Chapter Seven, even here there is evidence of Enzensberger's commitment to a kind of literary populism: while his poetry becomes increasingly abstract and cerebral, he perceives his writing not as belonging to an avant-garde modernism nor to a playful postmodernism, but as existing as a kind of intellectual leisure activity which is placed in the market place where the discerning consumer can exploit it according to her or his wishes. The purchase of a volume of poetry by whoever has the economic and cultural capital to do so, is ultimately evidence again of a kind of populism - of the plebiscite of the consumer.

CHAPTER ONE : The politics of popular culture:

Enzensberger, Adorno and the 'Kulturindustrie'

In order to understand the theoretical significance of Enzensberger's position on the political possibilities of popular culture, it is important to examine the appropriate German context out of which his writings develop. German theorists have made an enormous contribution to critical debates on the role and function of art and culture in western society in the twentieth century, a period which in many ways has been defined by two overriding factors. First, this period has witnessed enormous technological advances which have had an impact on both the subject and method of aesthetic representation. Second, the political history of this century has been dominated by the consolidation of capitalism and by the terrors of totalitarianism and of mass killing and mass destruction in local and global conflicts. Not surprisingly, for many theorists aesthetic and cultural argument has centred both on the emergence and meaning of newer cultural forms and practices and on the relationship of culture in all its guises to political and ethical action.

Of the many significant German-speaking contributors to these debates in the first half of the century, and even the briefest of lists would include Adorno, Benjamin, Bloch, Brecht, Kracauer and Lukács, for the purposes of this study it is crucial to examine the cultural theory of Theodor Adorno in more detail.¹ Adorno is a seminal figure for the depth and sophistication of his sociological and philosophical analysis of many aspects of the relationship between culture and society, particularly, as Andreas Huyssen notes, for pioneering the use of 'critical Marxist thought to illuminate Western mass culture, which for years had been dismissed by conservative cultural critics with elitist moralizing.'² Adorno's essays and his arguments with other theorists, particularly Walter Benjamin, introduce a new critical dimension to thinking about the relationship

¹ For a useful introduction to several key debates see Ronald Taylor (ed), Aesthetics and Politics, Verso, New Left Books, London, 1977.

² Andreas Huyssen, 'Introduction to Adorno', New German Critique, 6, Fall 1975, p. 3.

of both traditional art forms and the media and popular culture to contemporary society, one which manages to be deadly serious and sceptical in its approach without falling into a blanket dismissal of popular culture on the grounds of aesthetic taste.

It is important to highlight the work of Adorno for another reason, namely because of his significance for Enzensberger's earliest works. His influence on Enzensberger, at least at the beginning of the latter's career, is really beyond doubt. Karla Lydia Schultz, in a detailed examination of their relationship, identifies 'eine Wahlverwandtschaft, [...] die bisher wenig Beachtung gefunden hat'.³ She argues that Enzensberger can be seen as an 'äußerst eigensinniger "Schüler"'⁴ of Adorno's who has taken up and adapted key elements of the latter's thought. Schultz provides compelling evidence for Adorno as an influence on Enzensberger's earlier works, but it is important to stress that Enzensberger does not simply adopt Adorno's theoretical position wholesale, but that Adorno acts as an antagonistic stimulus for the development of Enzensberger's own ideas. It is in Enzensberger's confrontation with the implications of Adorno's theory for literature and popular culture in the Federal Republic that he begins to articulate an alternative position. As Schultz notes,

[e]r hat dem Lehrer heftig widersprochen und ist dabei auf seine Art zu Ausdrucksweisen gekommen, die der oft schwierig-versponnenen Gesellschaftskritik des Theoretikers neue, zeitgemäße Bedeutungen verleihen.⁵

Schultz is right to stress how much Enzensberger has learned from Adorno, and, even more significantly, to identify how, in his engagement with and partial rejection of Adorno's ideas, he comes to a position of his own which entails giving new impetus to Adorno's project. Enzensberger adapts key theoretical insights from Adorno's work and applies them in different ways to meet the changing historical situation in the post-war Federal Republic. Before examining the development of Enzensberger's position

³ Karla Lydia Schultz, 'Ex negativo: Enzensberger mit und gegen Adorno', in Grimm (ed), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 237.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

on the role of contemporary cultural forms in German society, it is necessary to draw out some of the theoretical implications of Adorno's writing.

Much of Adorno's key work was produced under the auspices of his association with theorists belonging to the Institut für Sozialforschung in Frankfurt, a grouping often referred to as the Frankfurt School.⁶ Although the work of members of the Frankfurt School was wide-ranging and included important differences between colleagues, central to its project was an interdisciplinary analysis of the role of contemporary social and political institutions in fostering the emergence of a just society. The critical theory produced by a number of Frankfurt School associates, not least Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and, later, Habermas, has been considered a version of 'western' Marxism and has proved influential for many subsequent social theorists. According to Russell A. Berman, the central question of so-called western Marxism is not how to create the conditions for social and political revolution, but to understand why the revolution predicted by Marx has failed.⁷ This question centres on an investigation of the apparent stability of a society which is still perceived to be alienated but is one in which there is no longer any reason to posit the proletariat as the agent of history, moving inexorably towards imminent revolution. As Berman notes, this historical pessimism towards central tenets of classical Marxist theory, particularly regarding the evolutionary presuppositions of Marxism on the inevitability of the emergence of socialism out of capitalism, directed the interest of members of the Frankfurt School into an exploration of material and issues which had been at the margins of much previous Marxist analysis, namely the processes of personality formation, the structures governing familial relationships and, most important for this study, cultural production, distribution and consumption.⁸

⁶ For a detailed account of the development and work of the Frankfurt School see Rolf Wiggershaus, Die Frankfurter Schule, Hanser, Munich and Vienna, 1986. Also useful is Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950, Heinemann, London, 1973.

⁷ Russell A. Berman, 'Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies', Cultural Studies of Modern Germany. History, Representation, and Nationhood, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1993, p. 16.

⁸ Ibid.

Members of the Frankfurt School, foremost amongst them Adorno, were concerned to analyse culture in all its contemporary manifestations, from the 'high' art of Schönberg, Berg, Kafka and Beckett to the products of popular culture. The general sociology of contemporary culture attempted by Adorno and others over a number of essays and books, was considered by its proponents to be of great relevance to an understanding of the political settlement of capitalist society. As David Held notes, for the Frankfurt theorists, it was important to

understand given works in terms of their social origins, form, content and function - in terms of the social totality. The conditions of labour, production and distribution must be examined, for society expresses itself through its cultural life and cultural phenomena contain within themselves reference to the socio-economic whole.⁹

Although all cultural phenomena were believed to exhibit to some degree in their internal structure and form aspects of the organisation of the society out of which they were formed¹⁰, those products of intellectual culture which claimed to be works of art were considered to exist in a complex, often contradictory relationship to the social environment which produced them. While not 'the output of a wholly autonomous sphere'¹¹, they were often considered to be both inside and outside their social reality, 'relatively autonomous'¹², and, in some cases, able to both affirm and negate existing social conditions. It was in these 'genuine' works of art that, as Held suggests, 'society both confirmed itself and maintained a critical image.'¹³ The interest of Adorno and

⁹ David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory. Horkheimer to Habermas, Polity, Cambridge, 1990, p. 77.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 78.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 80.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 81.

other theorists in contemporary cultural forms was not restricted to studies of 'high' culture or works of art. Just as important to the projects of the Frankfurt School was an understanding of the practices of the world of the media. The contradictory qualities exhibited by certain 'high' cultural works were not perceived to be present in popular cultural practices; rather, the media were felt to play a pivotal role in underpinning the stability of a society dominated by the concentration of capital and the general alienation of many members of that society. Where classical Marxist accounts of alienation concentrated on exploring the political economy governing capitalist society, such approaches had little to say about the increasing penetration of the market and administration into areas of everyday life beyond the workplace. Frankfurt School theory set out to focus attention on the way that popular cultural practices helped to uphold the political and economic status quo through the reiteration of capitalist ideology. The importance of developing a theory of popular culture was clear to Adorno and others who perceived that institutions and agencies such as the radio, film and, later, television industries, increasingly appeared to be able to structure, manage and control time spent away from the workplace, so-called free or leisure time.¹⁴ In this management of leisure time, these agencies contributed to the acceptance on the part of many of their consumers of the unjust distribution of economic and political power in contemporary society. Although Adorno, particularly, remained throughout his career concerned with questions of aesthetic theory, of the social relevance of works of art and of the political implications of an aesthetic avant-garde, for the Frankfurt School as a whole, the period embracing the 1930s and 1940s saw a sustained investigation of the political implications of popular culture. As David Held has written of this period,

[t]he emergence of an entertainment industry, the growth of the mass media, the blatant manipulation of culture by the Nazis and other totalitarian regimes, the shock of immigration to the US, the inevitable discovery of the glamour and glitter of the film and record industries: together all made imperative the task of assessing the changing patterns of culture.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

Although Adorno's analysis of the sociology of contemporary culture is extensive, it is by design fragmented, comprising a number of essays, articles and letters, as well as chapters in individual books. For the purposes of this study it is impossible to examine much of this wide output in any detail; in order to present a sketch of his position it is appropriate to focus on a small representative selection of key fragments.

One of the most celebrated of Adorno's comments on the relationship of 'high' culture to more popular cultural forms produced and distributed through the mass media comes in a letter to his friend and fellow Frankfurt contributor, Walter Benjamin, dated 18 March 1936. The letter was a critical response to Benjamin's famous essay, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit'¹⁶, which was due to be published in the Frankfurt School's periodical, Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung. Benjamin's essay argued that technical developments have completely overturned the status of works of art in contemporary society. The fact that works of art can be technically reproduced calls into question elements which made each work of art original and genuine and the authority of the work of art is shattered as its 'aura' - its authentic and unique aesthetic identity which constitutes its separateness from everyday life and which demands contemplation and awe on the part of the spectator - is undermined or stripped. As Benjamin stated, 'was im Zeitalter der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit des Kunstwerks verkümmert, das ist seine Aura'.¹⁷ As a result of its loss of aura, the work of art, according to Benjamin, is no longer part of an aesthetic realm, distanced from ordinary members of society, and this loss of separateness means that the reproduced or reproducible work of art becomes part of the domain of the everyday and mundane, a sphere from which it was previously distinct. For Benjamin, this could have a positive political significance; instead of belonging to the world of aesthetic tradition, linked by Benjamin to religious practices, magic and rituals, it begins to assume a political status:

¹⁶ This essay is available in Benjamin, Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1977, pp. 136-169.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 141.

In dem Augenblick aber, da der Maßstab der Echtheit an der Kunstproduktion versagt, hat sich auch die gesamte soziale Funktion der Kunst umgewälzt. An die Stelle ihrer Fundierung aufs Ritual tritt ihre Fundierung auf eine andere Praxis: nämlich ihre Fundierung auf Politik.¹⁸

Benjamin argued that by reproducing a work of art, it would be possible to remove it from its original context and place it in newer, politically contentious, situations in which its meaning could be open to a number of politically radical interpretations. Moreover, Benjamin claimed that new technical processes of reproduction were significant not only for our understanding of traditional works of art but also for the social implications of newer forms of representation such as film and photography. Benjamin argued that these new media were in themselves politically democratic as art would no longer belong to a cultural elite: the division between experts and non-experts was being broken down, for example, in the cinema, where the expertise of the spectator, based on repeated exposure to and experience of a range of films, was of great importance: in helping to construct the narrative by interpreting it, the spectator-as-expert becomes active and begins to achieve a measure of self-awareness.¹⁹

Adorno's response, while noting a shared interest in questions of aesthetics and technology, was highly critical. His letter outlines his rejection of Benjamin's understanding of the political implications of the loss of aura of works of art and attacks Benjamin's enthusiasm for the progressive potential of new techniques of aesthetic reproduction. Adorno argued that Benjamin had failed to perceive that the autonomous work of art contained simultaneously both a magical aura which was celebrated by bourgeois spectators and a transcendent, utopian element which could not be reduced to the magical or mythic. For Adorno, the work of art was 'inherently dialectical;

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 145.

¹⁹ 'Damit ist die Unterscheidung zwischen Autor und Publikum im Begriff, ihren grundsätzlichen Charakter zu verlieren', *ibid.*, p. 155.

within itself it juxtaposes the magical and the mark of freedom'.²⁰ Benjamin, claimed Adorno, had not been dialectical enough in considering the complex nature of the autonomy of the work of art and had reduced it to one of its constituent elements, its aura, rather than considering it in all its contradictions. Adorno claimed that an exploration of technical processes belonged to the project of much avant-garde art and that by utilising the technicality inherent in art itself (rather than the external technologies of mechanical reproduction favoured by Benjamin²¹), the avant-garde artist actually undermined the aura of the work created and enhanced the radical potential of the autonomous work of art:

precisely the uttermost consistency in the pursuit of the technical laws of autonomous art changes this art and instead of rendering it into a taboo or fetish, brings it close to the state of freedom, of something that can be consciously produced and made.²²

Adorno also stressed in his letter that evidence of the radical potential of the cinema as celebrated by Benjamin was hard to find. First, the aesthetic techniques of montage featured rarely in film productions. Adorno noted that when he had spent a day in Neubabelsberg film studios

what impressed me most was how little montage and all the advanced techniques that you emphasize are actually used; rather, reality is everywhere constructed with an infantile mimetism and then 'photographed'.²³

Second, he rejected the notion that either the members of cinema audiences or sports

²⁰ Adorno, 'Letter to W. Benjamin, 18 March 1936' in Taylor (ed), Aesthetics and Politics, p. 121.

²¹ See Huyssen, 'Introduction to Adorno', New German Critique, Fall 1975, p. 7.

²² Adorno, 'Letter to W. Benjamin', p. 122.

²³ Ibid., p. 124.

fans could be taken usefully as examples of the democracy of cultural expertise in contemporary society:

The laughter of the audience at a cinema [...] is anything but good and revolutionary; instead, it is full of the worst bourgeois sadism.²⁴

For Adorno, the cinema audience could not see through the mechanisms of production of the cinematic apparatus, as Benjamin claimed, and was still in need of critical enlightenment by intellectuals. In short, Adorno accused Benjamin of romanticism towards the radical potential of the newer media and their audiences as well as a failure to conceptualise adequately the relationship of the autonomous work of art to its social context. For Adorno, neither the autonomous work of art nor the products of commercial popular culture offer in themselves fully realisable progressive possibilities:

Both bear the stigmata of capitalism, both contain elements of change (but never, of course, the middle-term between Schönberg and the American film). Both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up.²⁵

Adorno ended this famous passage by implying that Benjamin was exhibiting an 'anarchistic romanticism'²⁶ in his confidence in the radical potential of the proletarian consumer of popular culture, who could, for Adorno, in no way be seen as a revolutionary subject.

The Adorno-Benjamin correspondence is useful for highlighting many productive areas for debate on the politics of popular culture in modern society. In his discussion of Benjamin's argument, Adorno sets out, broadly, a position which is largely pessimistic

²⁴ Ibid., p. 123.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

about the ability of culture to contribute to the pursuit of freedom in contemporary, alienated, society. He is dismissive of the claims of both 'high' culture and popular culture to represent unequivocally an emancipatory politics; neither 'high' nor popular culture exist outside contemporary capitalism and hence are compromised from the start. Both forms contain partial elements pointing towards freedom, but neither can successfully utilise these utopian possibilities. Adorno is most positive about the progressive techniques exhibited by some avant-garde art which is able to offer glimpses of freedom despite its position within a capitalist economy. What is clear, too, is his deep scepticism towards the possibility of an emancipatory politics emerging from within the domain of popular culture. There is a rejection of both the products of the media for their failure to offer any challenge to capitalist ideology, and of the argument that the consumers of popular culture are able to develop critical skills such as discernment and expertise which might then be applied to a consideration of their own exploited position within capitalism. For Adorno, popular culture and freedom are hardly related; the notion that a radical cultural politics might emerge from cultural consumption, a politics which could challenge the organising role of the market, is firmly ruled out.

Adorno revisited on a number of occasions the theory of contemporary culture outlined in his letter to Benjamin, supplementing these initial points with more detailed arguments. Despite the fragmentary nature of much of his writing, it can be argued that Adorno shows consistency in arguing repeatedly that popular culture is hopelessly commodified and that only an autonomous, avant-garde, aesthetic practice which negates existing social conditions offers any glimpse of emancipation. For example, in 'Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft'²⁷, first published in 1957, he maintains that lyric poetry can only be a vehicle for the project of social emancipation by refusing to engage directly with reified society: as Russell A. Berman notes, lyric poetry 'at its most self-referential, where it appears to withdraw most fully from realist correspondence,[....] suggests a transcendence, a radical revolution, and the no longer alienated language of

²⁷ Adorno, 'Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft', Noten zur Literatur, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1981, pp. 48-69.

an emancipated humanity'.²⁸ Again, in a later essay, 'Kultur und Verwaltung', Adorno declares that

Was mit Grund kulturell heißt, muß erinnernd aufnehmen, was am Wege liegen bleibt bei jenem Prozeß fortschreitender Naturbeherrschung, der in anwachsender Rationalität und immer rationaleren Herrschaftsformen sich spiegelt. Kultur ist der perennierende Einspruch des Besonderen gegen die Allgemeinheit, solange diese unversöhnt ist mit dem Besonderen.²⁹

Adorno's fullest discussion of the limited progressive potential of popular culture can be found in the chapter, 'Kulturindustrie: Aufklärung als Massenbetrug', in the volume written with Max Horkheimer, Dialektik der Aufklärung.³⁰ Adorno and Horkheimer had adopted the term 'Kulturindustrie' in their seminal analysis of the relationship between capitalism and everyday cultural practices to define how the project of the Enlightenment towards human emancipation from nature and myth had been extended into the field of aesthetics, resulting in the further enchainment of subjects through the mass production of cultural objects. Although in earlier drafts of the Dialektik der Aufklärung the authors had discussed the concept of 'mass culture', this was subsequently replaced by the term 'Kulturindustrie' to stress their rejection of the possibility that authentic cultural activity could be attributed to everyday life practices spontaneously, without the intervention of, and manipulation by, outside interests. In this way Adorno and Horkheimer emphasised that ordinary cultural activity in modern industrial societies could not be equated with an organic 'Volkskultur', and ruled out any possibility of cultural practices arising from below, independent and even subversive of the wishes of the 'Kulturindustrie'. As David Held notes, Adorno's analysis of contemporary culture leaves little space for the free and spontaneous behaviour of the consumer:

²⁸ Berman, 'Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies', p. 15.

²⁹ Adorno, 'Kultur und Verwaltung', Soziologische Schriften I, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1972, p. 128.

³⁰ Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1981. [Theodor W. Adorno, Gesammelte Schriften, Band 3].

The culture industry produces for mass consumption and significantly contributes to the determination of that consumption. [...] The consumer, as the producer, has no sovereignty. The culture industry, integrated into capitalism, in turn integrates consumers from above. Its goal is the production of goods that are profitable and consumable. It operates to ensure its own reproduction.³¹

For Adorno, then, the 'Kulturindustrie' allows no real space for the wishes and desires of the consumers of popular culture: patterns of consumption are not dependent on the sovereignty of the consumer, but are determined, or produced, as a constituent element of the 'Kulturindustrie' itself. As Adorno later explained, the expression "Kulturindustrie" was not to be understood too literally, but referred to the standardisation of cultural forms and to a rationalisation in techniques of distribution. However, although parts of cultural production appeared to operate individually and creatively, important sectors such as film-making could also be seen to operate in a similar fashion to other industries.³²

For Adorno, although this 'Aufklärung als Massenbetrug' was directly related to the dominance of technological reason, it also worked to preserve the concentration of wealth in the hands of an economic elite:

In der Tat ist es der Zirkel von Manipulation und rückwirkendem Bedürfnis, in dem die Einheit des Systems immer dichter zusammenschließt. Verschwiegen wird dabei, daß der Boden, auf dem die Technik Macht über die Gesellschaft gewinnt, die Macht der ökonomisch Stärksten über die Gesellschaft ist. Technische Rationalität heute ist die Rationalität der Herrschaft selbst.³³

³¹ Held, Introduction to Critical Theory, p. 91.

³² See Adorno, 'Culture Industry Revisited', New German Critique, 1975, Fall, 6, pp. 12-19.

³³ Adorno and Horkheimer, 'Kulturindustrie: Aufklärung als Massenbetrug', Dialektik der Aufklärung, p. 142.

Although the growth in technological capability had brought with it the promise of emancipation from existing repressive economic relations, its effect had been less to transform these conditions than to extend them to the sphere of art and aesthetics, and, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, to produce a more fully administered world.³⁴

Enzensberger's earliest work can be understood usefully as emerging against the background of Adorno's ideas. From his first publications in the late-1950s, it is clear that Enzensberger is taking part, at times explicitly, at times by implication, in a debate about contemporary culture which is framed by the questions set out by Adorno. From the outset, he is concerned to establish himself not just as an important socially critical poet, but also as a commentator on a whole range of 'high' and popular cultural forms. The diversity of Enzensberger's work even at this early stage in his career starts to assume a clear logic when seen as an exploration of the implications of Adorno's ideas on the relationship of 'high' and popular culture to the contemporary political settlement. This intellectual context has rarely been addressed in this way, with critics tending to focus narrowly on Enzensberger's poetry rather than to see his verse as one strand, albeit a hugely important one, of a more wide-scale and far-reaching cultural project. One of the more perceptive readers of Enzensberger, Reinhold Grimm, who has followed his career since his first publications in the mid-fifties, picked up on the importance to Enzensberger from the start of the role and meaning of popular culture:

Und natürlich gäbe es noch andere derartige Fäden, die man aufgreifen und durch die Jahre hindurch folgen könnte [...] Konstant bleibt nämlich das Interesse an den Medien Film, Rundfunk und Fernsehen, überhaupt am ganzen Komplex dessen, was Enzensberger unter dem Begriff 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' faßt und als 'die eigentliche Schlüsselindustrie des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts' bezeichnet.³⁵

³⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer discuss the concept of the 'administered life' in 'Begriff der Aufklärung', *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 56.

³⁵ Grimm, 'Bildnis Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Struktur, Ideologie und Vorgeschichte eines Gesellschaftskritikers', in Grimm (ed) *Hans Magnus Enzensberger*, pp. 147-48.

Without placing Enzensberger's project explicitly within the context of Adorno's sociological theory, Grimm at least points out that the former's deep and lasting interest in the media is absolutely central to his work as a writer, and should not be viewed as merely a footnote to his volumes of poetry.³⁶ Karla Lydia Schultz, more explicit about the significance of this aspect of Enzensberger's work, argues that his most important earliest publications emerge from an engagement with Adorno. She sees in this encounter a

nicht ungefähre Verwandtschaft zweier der kritischsten Köpfe und Herzen unserer Zeit [...] der eine von den Erfahrungen der Nazizeit geprägt; der andere, sechsundzwanzig Jahre jünger, von denen der Wirtschaftswunderzeit und dem, was danach gekommen ist; wobei sich die fünfziger und sechziger Jahre für beide überschneiden.³⁷

Schultz's argument suggests, rightly, the need to historicise Enzensberger's writing. A generation younger than Adorno, Enzensberger emerges as a writer in the late-1950s in a German state already supposedly democratic and post-fascist and beginning to enjoy the material benefits brought by its "restoration" of capitalism³⁸ and its commitment to liberal democracy and a consumer society modelled largely on American lines.³⁹ Although there is no evidence of a direct debate between Adorno and Enzensberger on the merits of critical theory - in Karla Lydia Schultz's exploration of the relationship between Enzensberger's earliest publications and the writings of Adorno, she can find

³⁶ According to Grimm, Enzensberger's interests in the media 'mögen, verglichen mit jenen, zunächst nebensächlich wirken, sind jedoch aufs engste mit dem Grundmuster seiner schriftstellerischen Tätigkeit verflochten'. Ibid., p. 148.

³⁷ Schultz, 'Ex negativo: Enzensberger mit und gegen Adorno', p. 237.

³⁸ Burns, 'Introduction', German Cultural Studies – An Introduction, p. 6.

³⁹ See Keith Bullivant and C. Jane Rice, 'Reconstruction and Integration: The Culture of West German Stabilization 1945 to 1968', in Burns (ed), German Cultural Studies – An Introduction, pp. 230-31.

only five direct references to the latter's work⁴⁰ - nevertheless, Enzensberger's work in this period is informed by a sustained engagement with Adorno's ideas, particularly concerning the 'Kulturindustrie' thesis and the relationship of poetry to political commitment. Enzensberger's work between 1955 and about 1964 can be characterised as a practical attempt to test out the validity of Adorno's theories on 'high' culture and the 'Kulturindustrie'. It will be argued that Enzensberger initially largely accepts Adorno's description of contemporary cultural production as following a commodified, industrial model, yet questions Adorno's insistence on the absolute dominance of the 'Kulturindustrie' and its ability to determine rigidly cultural production and consumption. When examined closely, Enzensberger's earliest publications show his attempts to find aporia or blind-spots inside the 'Kulturindustrie' which may be usefully exploited in a strategy of resisting the 'Kulturindustrie' from within.

Criticism of the earliest writings by Enzensberger tends to begin by looking at his first published volume of poetry, verteidigung der wölfe, which appeared with Suhrkamp in 1957. However, although this is Enzensberger's first substantial contribution to German literature, his career as a writer using different genres and operating self-consciously from within the sphere of the media can be seen to have begun before the appearance of this book and precedes his swift recognition as an important poet. He had been contributing essays and reviews to newspapers and journals from 1955, and, after finishing his thesis on Clemens Brentano that year, he had accepted an appointment in the radio essay department of the Süddeutscher Rundfunk, working under Alfred Andersch.⁴¹ This move into radio, at a time when Enzensberger's doctorate might have opened up the chance for an academic career in Germany,

⁴⁰ 'Sucht man in seinem lyrischen und essayistischen Werk nach weiteren Verweisen, so finden sich nur wenige: ein Zitat, das ins Nachdenken über die Lyrikerin Nelly Sachs einbezogen ist (1959); ein Adorno gewidmetes Gedicht in blindenschrift (1964); Anspielungen auf die Unbrauchbarkeit von dessen Schriften in Kursbuch (1967/68); Erwähnung eines Adorno-Titels in einem weiteren Gedicht (1970); Berufung auf die von Adorno betonte Trennung von Theorie und Praxis in Politische Brosamen (1982).' Schultz, 'Ex negativo: Enzensberger mit und gegen Adorno', p. 237.

⁴¹ According to Andersch, this appointment 'rescued' Enzensberger from an unhappy time working for Reader's Digest. See Stephan Reinhardt, Alfred Andersch - eine Bibliographie, Diogenes, Zurich, 1990, pp. 250-251.

indicates his interest in and commitment to the media. When he did accept an invitation to teach, it was in the dynamic and more applied environment of the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, rather than in the literature department of a traditional university.⁴² Similarly, it is often overlooked that one of Enzensberger's earliest pieces of writing was the extensive voiceover commentary for Ottmar Domnick's acclaimed experimental film, Jonas, in 1957.⁴³

The most explicit statement setting out Enzensberger's self-understanding as a writer operating within the 'Kulturindustrie' came in the same year with his short essay in the journal, Akzente which was offering a number of writers the opportunity to write on the theme of 'Dichtung und Film'. Enzensberger's piece, the humorously titled 'Literatur und Linse und Beweis dessen, daß ihre glückhafte Kopulation derzeit unmöglich'⁴⁴, is particularly revealing about both Enzensberger's position on the state of contemporary culture and about the range of his cultural awareness. This essay ostensibly explores the possibilities for contemporary writers to contribute to the artistically moribund German film industry; in fact, what the essay offers is a concise and compelling account of Enzensberger's position regarding Adorno's analysis of the 'Kulturindustrie' and of the role of the literary intellectual in a society dominated culturally by the growth of the media. Enzensberger makes many important points in this short piece, and it is worth exploring them in some detail, not least because the essay has received such little consideration from other critics.

Enzensberger starts by immediately distancing himself from what he terms '[e]in

⁴² See the 'Vita' in Grimm (ed), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 341, which claims that Enzensberger taught in Ulm between 1955 and 1957.

⁴³ Christine Noll Brinkmann argues that Jonas made an important early contribution to the reinvigoration of the German Spielfilm in the late-1950s and early-1960s which led to the phenomenon of 'Der junge deutsche Film' and, subsequently, to the New German Cinema. See Christine Noll Brinkmann, 'Experimentalfilm, 1920-1990: Einzelgänge und Schübe', in Wolfgang Jacobsen et al. (eds), Geschichte des deutschen Films, Metzler, Stuttgart, 1993, p. 428.

⁴⁴ Enzensberger, 'Literatur und Linse und Beweis dessen, daß ihre glückhafte Kopulation derzeit unmöglich', Akzente, 1956, 3, pp. 207-13.

Klischee der restaurativen Kulturkritik',⁴⁵ namely the trend to lament the passing of the age of literacy and to see in contemporary culture only the emergence of the analphabet, or 'Massenmensch'.⁴⁶ This dismissal immediately places Enzensberger some distance from conservative critics of both the left and right in the Federal Republic, as does his defence of the right of the so-called 'Massenmensch' to choose to read an 'Illustrierte' rather than a work of cultural criticism. However, he argues that those people who have a stake in literary culture – writers and their readers – have a duty to take the emergence of the media seriously if they wish to help shape the intellectual and spiritual state of society:

Und sofern sie mehr als Schreiber und Leser sind, sofern sie wirklich als Verantwortliche für den geistigen Zustand ihrer Gegenwart sich fühlen, müssen sie Einfluß auf diese Medien, den Funk, das Fernsehen und den Film, fordern.⁴⁷

Although he claims that radio and, to a lesser extent, television have managed to develop 'weithin brauchbare Symbiosen zwischen Autoren und Apparaten',⁴⁸ he suggests that there is little evidence of useful artistic collaboration between writers and the contemporary German film industry. What Enzensberger sees in the situation of the German film industry is a classic example of the operations of the 'Kulturindustrie' – a popular and commercial success and yet a cultural sphere devoid of artistic merit:

Mag die deutsche Filmindustrie wirtschaftlich ungesund, mag sie, wie ihr häufig vorgeworfen wird, unsolide sein: so dreht sie doch auf vollen Touren, die Kinos sind gefüllt, kein Anlaß zur Beunruhigung ist gegeben. Was hier vorliegt, ist

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 207.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 207.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Unfortunately, Enzensberger offers here no evidence to support this assertion. See also Bertolt Brecht on the radical potential of radio in Brecht, Gesammelte Werke 18 – Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst I, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1967, pp. 117-34.

keine Absatzkrise, es ist ein chronischer künstlerischer Notstand.⁴⁹

But whereas Adorno might argue that film as a reproducible medium and certainly film organised as an industry would rule out a priori the very possibility of allowing authentic art to be created, Enzensberger takes a very different line. In order to explore the reasons behind the absence of literary intellectuals and writers from the world of cinema, he proposes following two lines of enquiry. The first compares the formal aesthetic properties of film and literature to see whether they are at all related or relational, and hence whether writers qua writers would have anything at all to contribute to the cinema. His second route is pragmatic and involves a sociohistorical rather than formal analysis of film by investigating the conditions of film production in Germany in 1956. As Enzensberger argues, the first line of enquiry will answer which, if any, function literature is able to fulfil in the world of film in general, while the second will explore whether literature can actually fulfil any function in the specific situation of the contemporary German cinema. The fact that Enzensberger takes this route in his essay, even before his conclusions are delivered, suggests that he might adopt a more pragmatic position with regard to the media than Adorno: his inclusion of the second, sociohistorical line of enquiry already presupposes that the formal properties of film do not preclude an element of literarisation and hence, in this context, do not rule out the possibility of film as art.

In his analysis of film aesthetics, Enzensberger offers a sketch of all narrative art in a technological age. Using the concept of negative entropy adopted from information science, the writer asserts that film is information, and therefore by extension, language. He continues by analysing it on three levels: semantic, syntactic, and compositional. The basic element of film-as-language is the image, whose meaning, he argues, can be supported or subverted by the secondary element of sound.⁵⁰ Importantly, he argues

⁴⁹ Enzensberger, 'Literatur und Linse', p. 207.

⁵⁰ It is interesting in this respect to note just how important the tension is between sound and image in the film, Jonas. While the narrative and camerawork is largely conventional, the use of sound and particularly Enzensberger's commentary (a montage of advertising slogans, religious and political quotations and dramatic voices representing the fragmented psyche of the eponymous hero in the Federal

that the meaning of a single image is not fixed but contingent, first, on its place in a sequence, and second on the context of its production and reception.⁵¹ Enzensberger's analysis of film allows an extension into the reading and interpretation of his poems, which operate on existing levels of language, changing meaning and manipulating the context of discourse into which they are released. Enzensberger's own poetics are clearly influenced by the author's reading of film - he compares film techniques with the mechanics of verse:

Ausschnitt, Verkürzung, Totale, Nah- und Großaufnahme, Helldunkel
Und Farbwert, Korn, symbolische Potenz werden erst durch solchen Bezug
wirksam, mag er nun ausdrücklich, das heißt im Film selbst, oder imaginativ
gegeben sein. In ganz ähnlicher Weise wirkt das dichterische, und zwar
besonders das lyrische Wort. Das läßt sich an der Mechanik der Metapher gut
nachweisen.⁵²

Already present at this early stage of Enzensberger's career are a poetics which is influenced by the technology of film. He extends his comparison of film aesthetics and poetics by suggesting that they share a similar relationship to time:

Auf eine solche Entsprechung von lyrischem Wort und filmischem Bild weist
auch beider Zeitverhältnis hin, ihre Gegenwärtigkeit: beide holen weder
Vergangenheit episch auf, noch entwerfen sie dramatisch Zukünftiges. Führen
wir den Vergleich noch einen Schritt weiter, so wäre als Analogon zum Vers die
Einstellung zu nennen. Dabei entspräche dem Zeilende der (harte oder weiche)

'Wirtschaftswunderland') is so unusual and well-achieved as to make the film as a whole nearer to an experimental piece than a conventional Spielfilm. See Jonas, directed Ottmar Domnick, commentary H.M.Enzensberger, SüdWestFunk, 1957.

⁵¹ 'Seinen eigentlichen Gehalt gewinnt es erst aus dem Kontext, aus dem Zusammenhang, aus dem und in den es gesetzt wird.' Enzensberger, 'Literatur und Linse', p. 209. This compositional aesthetic, largely based on techniques of montage, is also applicable to so much of Enzensberger's early poetry. See Chapter Two, pp. 50-51.

⁵² Ibid., p. 209.

The figure in the making of a film whose role is equivalent to that of the poet, the artist in the creation of film-as-art, is not the director but the cameraman, who is responsible for the semantic level of the film, the exact image on the screen.⁵⁴ Individual images are then organised into a sequence, or scene, which Enzensberger terms the syntactic level of the film, controlled by the director. Enzensberger finds no poetic equivalent for this feature, which relies on rhythm and phrasing, and not on entrances and exits as is implied by the erroneous comparison some critics make with the theatre. Although dialogue comes into this category, and Enzensberger names some writers who have had some success writing for film, it is only a secondary role in support of the sequence of images.⁵⁵

The third, compositional, level of film, the 'Handlung' according to Enzensberger, also has its literary equivalent, namely the epic or novel. This is a crucial point for Enzensberger, as he argues that to misunderstand the compositional attributes of film, that is, to attempt to align film with the theatre, with the dramatic rather than epic mode, is precisely what leads to commodified rather than to critical cinema:

Aus alldem folgt, daß der Aufbau von Handlung im Sinn des Dramas zu
filmfremden Mustern führen muß. Es kommt so nicht zu legitimer
Transposition, sondern zur Flucht in eine Scheinwelt. Hier liegt die ästhetische
Wurzel der allgemeinen Verlogenheit des Konsumfilms.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Enzensberger does not propose putting poets to work behind the camera in order to raise the artistic level of contemporary films, but he does suggest that literary intellectuals can anticipate the work of the cameraman by writing for the cinema with specific images in mind.

⁵⁵ 'Der Dialogschreiber kann also nur Beihelfer des Regisseurs sein. Übrigens ist das keine verächtliche Aufgabe: Autoren wie Moravia, Cocteau, Anouilh und Prévert haben sich ihr unterzogen.' Ibid., p. 210.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Enzensberger then makes a crucial claim about the critical potential of the contemporary cinema:

Schließlich ist der Film potentiell, wie der Roman, ein Instrument der Kritik, eben auf Grund seines Wirklichkeitsverhältnisses. Darin liegt seine gesellschaftliche Funktion, die in der Praxis freilich stracks ins Gegenteil, in die Erzeugung von eskapistischen Traumwelten, verkehrt wird.⁵⁷

At this point Enzensberger's analysis of film as a medium is clearly pointing away from Adorno's comments on the newer media in his debate with Benjamin; in fact, Enzensberger's position is nearer, at least in this passage, to the media optimism of Benjamin. However, whatever potential film might have as a critical medium, it is, according to Enzensberger, rarely utilised owing to the economic structures that govern the film industry in practice. The film industry in Germany quite clearly refuses to turn itself over to critically minded epic writers:

Hier liegt die gesellschaftliche Wurzel der allgemeinen Verlogenheit des Konsumfilms, der phantomhaft wirkt gleichermaßen in dem was, wie in dem, auf welche Weise er es sagt⁵⁸

The illusory nature of the 'Konsumfilm' identified by Enzensberger here, certainly takes him nearer, again, to the position occupied by Adorno. There is no mention at this stage of the critical expertise of the audience of such films, which, according to Benjamin, had made the commercial cinema into a potential site for the emergence of a radical politics. In short, an analysis of the aesthetics of film leads Enzensberger to conclude that, as a medium, it can be used in a critical capacity. The very nature of film as a form does not preclude a space for a critical, oppositional aesthetic practice. However, as Enzensberger then argues at length, the reality of the German film industry

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 211.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

as presently structured precludes the emergence of film as a truly critical medium. In Enzensberger's view, this is largely down to the expenditure needed for film production – equipment, personnel and investment – which in practice means that producers and hence investors control the kind of films made:

Als Unternehmer treten Industrielle ein, die lediglich an maximalen Gewinnen interessiert sind. Angesichts der großen Risiken bedeutet das den Untergang aller künstlerischen Erwägungen. Alle Maßstäbe, die für die Herstellung von Filmen gelten, werden aus dem Konsum abgeleitet.⁵⁹

Another detrimental feature is the marketing of films according to the participating actors. Although directors are sometimes strong enough to be the marketing focus of a film, the writer never can be. For this reason it is inconceivable for a first-rate writer to work in film at this time:

Dem einen oder anderen, der sie versucht, mag es gelingen, einen Dialogfetzen durch eine Produktion hindurchzuretten; mancher wird einen Stoff verkaufen und nach dessen totaler Verstümmelung durch einstweilige Verfügung erreichen, daß sein Name nicht im Vorspann erscheint: der Rest ist hackwriting und Leichenfledderei. Der Rest ist das Schweigen der Besten.⁶⁰

After looking at both the comparative aesthetics of film and literature and at the practical situation which governs the production of films, Enzensberger, quoting Brecht, suggests that little has changed since Brecht's description of the supply character of opera in 1931⁶¹ – writers deliver what now amounts to raw material to the 'Apparat' or industry, and the 'Apparat' produces the finished work, which is never the work of art intended by the writer. Echoing Brecht, Enzensberger concludes:

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 211.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 212.

⁶¹ Ibid. See Steve Giles, Bertolt Brecht and Critical Theory. Marxism, Modernism and the Threepenny Lawsuit, Peter Lang, Bern, 1997.

Wir haben den Apparat auf seine Eignung für das Kunstwerk hin überprüft. Er ist ungeeignet.⁶²

Enzensberger's dual line of enquiry has led him, then, to argue that although there is nothing in the formal properties of film which precludes the production of film-as-art, his socio-historical analysis of the contemporary German film industry leads him to rule out the possibility of a radical cinema. In this conclusion he combines elements of Adorno's pessimism about the ability of popular culture to contribute to an emancipatory practice, given the prevailing structural arrangements of the 'Kulturindustrie', with glimpses of a Benjaminian optimism that given the right conditions (which Adorno might see as an impossibly romantic, or naively utopian proviso) film could fulfil its radical potential as a critical medium. Enzensberger's acclaimed collaboration with Ottmar Domnick on the independent film Jonas, of course, bears out his argument.⁶³ The film, with its complex, layered soundtrack and challenging narrative, in addition to its lack of conventional plot or stars, nevertheless sparked off much audience interest and provoked considerable public, as well as critical, debate.⁶⁴

Enzensberger sums up this dialectical approach to the question of the 'Kulturindustrie'

⁶² Enzensberger, 'Literatur und Linse', p. 212.

⁶³ 'Was hier geschah, galt als unmöglich. Ein Außenseiter, der Nervenarzt Dr. Domnick, schrieb eines Tages, jenseits der Filmindustrie, ein Drehbuch, holte sich den Kameramann Andor von Barsy, der vor 25 Jahren den meisterhaften Kulturfilm Tote Wasser photographierte, und drehte, immer noch jenseits der Filmindustrie, auf Straßen und Dächern, ohne Atelier, ohne Stars, ohne Schminke, ohne Erfahrung, ohne Verleih und zu allem Überfluß fast ohne Handlung, für ein Bruchteil der Gelder, die unsere ärmlichsten Schnulzen zu kosten pflegen, einen Film, der nicht nur Preis um Preis errang (und jeder Preis war zugleich eine Provokation an die Adresse der professionellen Filmbranche), sondern auch noch Kassenerfolge.' Gunter Groll, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 25 November 1957, reprinted in Hilmar Hoffmann and Walter Schobert (ed), Zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Westdeutscher Nachkriegsfilm 1946-1962, Deutsches Filmmuseum, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, p. 394.

⁶⁴ 'Denn nicht über die Filme, die mit Gewalt eine Publikumssensation erzwingen wollten, redete man sich die Köpfe heiß, sondern über Jonas, der alles andere als eine Publikumssensation im Sinne hatte und gerade dadurch wurde'. Ibid.

and of the possibility for using popular cultural forms in a politically emancipatory way in a key statement hidden away at the end of his essay. It stands as his answer to the questions concerning the political potential of popular culture set out by Adorno, and also stands as a motto for much of his subsequent cultural practice:

Die Kulturindustrie gehört zu unserer Wirklichkeit. Statt an ihr gebildet zu nörgeln, sollte man ihre Gesetzmäßigkeiten erforschen. Zu ihren Lebensbedingungen gehört es, daß sie über die unmittelbare Rentabilität hinauszudenken versteht. Was an ihr Industrie ist, muß die Kultur (als Bedingung ihrer Möglichkeit) künstlerisch und finanziell frei gedeihen lassen.⁶⁵

For Enzensberger, there is, despite his recognition of the 'Kulturindustrie', room for a guarded optimism. The 'Kulturindustrie', in Enzensberger's view, is much less rigidly dominating than the version proposed by Adorno: for the 'Kulturindustrie' to continue it has to be able to think further than a mere consideration of profits. What is needed is a thorough exploration of the specific powers and limits of the 'Kulturindustrie' and also a strategy for operating within it. Without mentioning Adorno by name in the essay, Enzensberger certainly rejects his mandarin withdrawal from engagement with the operations of the 'Kulturindustrie'.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO: 'Ein schwieriges Vergnügen' - poetry and the politics of the 'Wirtschaftswunder'

Much of Enzensberger's work in the late-1950s and early-1960s can be usefully understood in the context of his dialectical approach to Adorno's 'Kulturindustrie' thesis. On the one hand, Enzensberger accepts at this time that all cultural production occurs within the parameters of the 'Kulturindustrie'; on the other, he is less convinced than Adorno of the monolithic nature of cultural production under the 'Kulturindustrie'. Consequently, he is guardedly optimistic about the possibility of producing critical art despite the general commodification of contemporary culture, and evinces a commitment to the search for a strategy, a modus operandi, for subverting the 'Kulturindustrie' from the inside in order to achieve and maintain a politically just society.

The 'Kulturindustrie' can be understood in both a metaphorical and a literal sense. As a metaphor, it evokes the idea of the ontological condition for the creation and dissemination of art in modernity. However, it can also be understood in a more literal sense as the network of organisations, institutions, broadcasting houses, publishers and newspapers which constitute the physical sites for the production and distribution of culture in contemporary society. In this latter sense, the 'Kulturindustrie' in the Federal Republic in the late-1950s takes on a more concrete, physical presence: its existence could be tracked meaningfully across a number of physical sites and spaces. In much of Enzensberger's work at this time there is a strategic, spatial element. His early work produces a geography of spaces for exploring and testing the rules of existence of the 'Kulturindustrie', less in its abstract sense and more in the way it manifests itself as a network linking various institutions in the post-war Federal Republic.

If we are to understand Enzensberger's writing in this period as participating in a search for spaces and sites to occupy which might prove productive in the struggle with the

ideological operations of the 'Kulturindustrie', then it is useful to borrow the concept of the heterotopia from Michel Foucault. Unlike utopias, which Foucault classifies as 'fundamentally unreal spaces'¹, heterotopias are very real places or sites which are found in every culture and every civilisation. According to Foucault, they

are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.²

Amongst the various 'heterotopias' that Foucault identifies in contemporary western society are the museum, the library and, more recently, the cinema – all very real spaces in an empirical sense which nevertheless can represent, contest or invert social conditions and, in Edward W. Soja's words, 'reveal the meaning of social being'.³ The concept of the heterotopia can be usefully applied to Enzensberger's texts in this period. His essays and poems, not least because of their spatial compositional techniques, which draw on montage, quotation and the juxtaposition of normally distinct discourses, have a heterotopian function within the sites of the 'Kulturindustrie'. Many poems embody a real space within which the operations of the 'Kulturindustrie' may be critically assessed. In other poems, the lyric itself has as its theme the quest for a free space within the confines of contemporary society, permeated by the products of the 'Kulturindustrie' and caught within the discourses of conservative politics, capitalism and militarism. In both these guises, Enzensberger's earliest poems differ substantially in their relationship to the direct representation of social reality from Adorno's model of the critical poem which negates, rather than

¹ Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', Diacritics, 1986, Spring, p. 24.

² Ibid.

³ Edward W. Soja, 'Heterotopologies: A Remembrance of Other Spaces in the Citadel-LA', in S. Watson and K. Gibson (eds), Postmodern Cities and Spaces, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995, p. 14.

represents, social alienation.⁴

Perhaps Enzensberger's first heterotopian fiction, a piece again overlooked by many critics, is 'Louisiana Story'⁵, written for the radio in 1957 and later published as a short story. Although its central theme is the narrator's search for the rightful claimant to an inheritance, this search is merely a pretext. The real quest undertaken in the narrative is for a physical space which would allow to flourish both a genuine popular culture and an ecologically healthy natural world, despite the dominance of the ubiquitous signs of the 'Kulturindustrie'. The movement of the narrator through the region traces the possible permutations of city and country, of society and wilderness, without finding an ultimate solution. Louisiana, despite large areas of apparent wilderness, is represented as a place dominated in New Orleans by the tourist industry. The famous Bourbon Street is dismissed as 'eine sauer gewordene Romanze, ein Treffpunkt der obszön als Heiterkeit verummten Tristesse'⁶ and the illusory pleasures of its jazz bars and night-clubs mask 'Nepp, Schummerlicht und Verlorenheit'⁷. Even in the depths of the

⁴ See Chapter One, pp. 31-32. Adorno makes this point repeatedly in 'Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft': 'Sein Abstand vom bloßen Dasein wird zum Maß von dessen Falschem und Schlechtem. Im Protest dagegen spricht das Gedicht den Traum einer Welt aus, in der es anders wäre', p. 52; the critical strength of a poem 'wird um so vollkommener sein, je weniger das Gebilde das Verhältnis von Ich und Gesellschaft thematisch macht, je unwillkürlicher es vielmehr im Gebilde von sich aus kristallisiert', p. 55; and 'Darum zeigt Lyrik dort sich am tiefsten gesellschaftlich verbürgt, wo sie nicht der Gesellschaft nach dem Munde redet, wo sie nichts mitteilt, sondern wo das Subjekt, dem der Ausdruck glückt, zum Einstand mit der Sprache selber kommt, dem, wohin diese von sich aus möchte', p. 56.

⁵ Enzensberger, 'Louisiana Story', in Alfred Gong (ed), Interview mit Amerika, Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, Munich, 1962, pp. 256-87. It was written originally as a radio play, broadcast in the autumn of 1957 by Hessischer Rundfunk under the title, 'Dunkle Erbschaft, tiefe Bayou'. The background material for the story was gathered during an extended trip across the southern and eastern United States earlier that year which also furnished information for another radio piece and the poems 'statue of liberty' and 'manhattan island' which appeared in Sinn und Form, 1957, 6, pp. 1024-26.

⁶ Enzensberger, 'Louisiana Story', p. 268.

⁷ Ibid.

Mississippi Delta, 'ein Ort am Ende der Welt'⁸, the narrator finds no pastoral idyll:

Überall dieser Schleim. Fernsehintennen und Jukeboxen. Leere Coca-Cola Flaschen und Benzinfässer. Den ganzen Dreck haben sie hierhergeschleppt. Die Zivilisation, sie ist schlimmer als die Moskitos.⁹

The narrative gives few glimpses of either an authentic popular culture, despite the rich cultural history of the various immigrant groups to Louisiana, or of an undamaged natural world. Similarly, there are few genuinely heterotopian sites in 'Louisiana Story', spaces which might be used to contest in some way the power of the 'Kulturindustrie' to standardise and rationalise culture. The natural history museum in New Orleans, with its refusal to accommodate itself to the demands of contemporaneity, is able to preserve limited evidence of alternative ways of living, not least in its literal preservation of species threatened in the wilderness.¹⁰ Any authentic popular expression, such as the short flowering of Creole culture¹¹, is quickly integrated into the 'Kulturindustrie' and emerges, like the Calypso song the narrator hears on a jukebox¹², as a commodity to be consumed by tourists. The primitive swamp forests of Louisiana are just as full of the flotsam and jetsam of junk society as the industrial cities. Although the lives of individual characters seem to offer a partially positive solution, there is no completely convincing alternative to the increasing industrialisation of the American landscape.¹³

⁸ Ibid., p. 276.

⁹ Ibid., p. 282.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 265-67.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 257.

¹² Ibid., p. 268.

¹³ While reading an element of nostalgia in the piece for a simpler way of living, Michael Buckley, one of the few critics to have considered 'Louisiana Story', concludes similarly that there is no viable escape: 'The people who desire this are depicted in the main as anachronisms and ineffectual, idiosyncratic outsiders [...] [T]here is in 'Louisiana Story' no

Like many of the poems discussed below, the narrative of 'Louisiana Story' employs a montage technique to bring together diverse discourses and voices. The story is related largely in the voice of the narrating lawyer, interspersed with transcripts of interviews with characters he encounters. At frequent intervals, however, the narrative is interrupted by another level of discourse, an encyclopaedic 'Tagebuchstimme', which provides background information on etymology, history and science. This factual information disrupts any 'naturalistic' flow of action: the narrative operates not as a conventional chronology, structured around temporal principles, but rather as a grid where different voices are juxtaposed and the narrative that emerges has a spatial element. This technique is used later to considerable effect as a way of writing socially critical poetry.

Enzensberger's first volume of poetry, verteidigung der wölfe, published in 1957, is almost exclusively concerned with an exploration of language and power in the rebuilt Federal Republic at the time of the 'Wirtschaftswunder'. The volume contains a number of poems which attempt to challenge the language used by different, often interwoven, sites of power, such as the media, the military and the conservative political establishment, to maintain existing conditions. In this way an attempt is made to destabilise the rhetoric of these specific technologies of power.

There is a strong heterotopian element to Enzensberger's poetics at this point. Not only are so many poems concerned with sites and spaces in the contemporary Federal Republic, but also the compositional techniques of montage, quotation and juxtaposition allow the poems themselves to be read as heterotopian sites. This can be explained if Foucault's concept of heterotopia quoted above is slightly rewritten and the word 'discourse' used to replace the word 'site'. In this way it would make sense to

well-defined group with the potential for taking up the task of actualizing a society acceptable to the author.' See Michael Travers Buckley, Art is not Enough. Hans Magnus Enzensberger and the Politics of Poetry, Unpublished dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1975, p. 54.

speak of heterotopian poems as

something like counter-discourses, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real discourses, all the other real discourses that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.¹⁴

Foucault has often argued the material nature of discourse, its formative social power:

[I]n every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality.¹⁵

There can be no doubt that Enzensberger links certain forms of discourse with the active maintenance of power, and that he sees poetry as being primarily concerned with language itself and its use in certain settings and contexts. Many poems utilise to differing degrees forms of discourse from other areas of society, such as advertising or military, technical and economic jargon, which are quoted within the new framework of the poem. By incorporating snatches of these discourses into an area of play, of chance, namely the poem, Enzensberger aims to destabilise the existing power relations through the enlightenment of the readership. In this way, the discourse of the poem attempts to evade repressive social relations, and thereby to increase the power at the disposal of ordinary people.

In this sense, it could also be argued that Enzensberger intends his earliest poems to contribute, if not to popular culture, than at least to a very public form of cultural practice. His first volume was accompanied by an announcement which attempted to

¹⁴ See above, p. 47.

¹⁵ Foucault, 'The Discourse on Language', The Archaeology of Knowledge, Pantheon, New York, 1982, p. 216.

define their sphere of influence in advance, precluding a more typical, private, reception:

Hans Magnus Enzensberger will seine Gedichte verstanden wissen als
Inschriften, Plakate, Flugblätter, in eine Mauer geritzt, auf eine Mauer geklebt,
vor einer Mauer verteilt; nicht im Raum sollen sie verklingen, in den Ohren des
geduldigen Lesers, sondern vor den Augen vieler, und gerade der Ungeduldigen,
sollen sie stehen und leben, sollen auf sie wirken wie das Inserat in der Zeitung,
das Plakat auf der Litfaßsäule, die Schrift am Himmel. Sie sollen Mitteilungen
sein, hier und jetzt, an uns und alle.¹⁶

Enzensberger draws attention to the status of his poems as written artefacts in a world of competing discourses. These other forms of writing – inscriptions, placards, leaflets, small ads and posters – are characterised by the public and functional nature of their circulation. Similarly, the poems in the volume are intended to have a clear spatial and social function: they should occupy a public site in which they should be read by as many people as possible. They are not intended for the usual contemplative reader of poetry. The poems should function as mass spectacle, in a similar way to an advert in a newspaper or on a billboard.

The notion of poetry oriented towards public communication places Enzensberger at odds with one dominant strand of German poetics, that represented by Gottfried Benn and his adherents, in the 1950s.¹⁷ In his early essay, 'Schlerenschleifer und Poeten'¹⁸, Enzensberger makes claims for a poetry of social criticism which challenge this reigning

¹⁶ Enzensberger, (accompanying document to) verteidigung der wölfe, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1957.

¹⁷ For an overview of developments in German poetry at this time see Peter Rühmkorf, 'Das lyrische Weltbild der Nachkriegsdeutschen', Die Jahre die Ihr kennt. Anfälle und Erinnerungen, Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1979, pp. 88-110.

¹⁸ Enzensberger, 'Scherenschleifer und Poeten', in Hans Bender (ed), Mein Gedicht ist mein Messer. Lyriker zu ihren Gedichten, Paul List Verlag, Munich, 1961, pp. 144-48.

poetic doctrine. According to Enzensberger, a poem

ist ein Artefakt, ein Kunstprodukt, ein technisches Erzeugnis [...] mithin ein Gebrauchsgegenstand.¹⁹

The author rejects what he views as the prevailing orthodoxy deriving from Benn, namely that the material out of which poetry is made is developed from the poet's impressions which are subsequently 'discharged'.²⁰ For Enzensberger, poems are not pure, self-contained, aesthetic objects²¹, but should be seen rather as complex linguistic devices: 'Das Material des Gedichtschreibers ist zunächst und zuletzt die Sprache'.²² On this last point, Benn might be in agreement. In his influential 'Probleme der Lyrik', for example, we are told that 'Das neue Gedicht, die Lyrik, ist ein Kunstprodukt'.²³ Benn writes that the poem is a product manufactured out of the different levels of language accessible to a society at a given moment and remarks on his possession of a number of forms of language:

Diese Sprache mit ihrer jahrhundertealten Tradition, ihren von lyrischen

¹⁹ Enzensberger, 'Scherenschleifer und Poeten', p. 144. Although Brecht is not mentioned in this piece, the idea of the poem as 'Gebrauchsgegenstand' places Enzensberger nearer to Brecht than Benn at this point. See Wolf Koepke, 'Enzensberger and the Possibility of Political Poetry', in Betty Nance Weber and Hubert Heinen (eds), Bertolt Brecht. Political Theory and Literary Practice, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1980, p. 180.

²⁰ In his argument, Enzensberger refers explicitly to Gottfried Benn's aesthetic theories in Kunst und Macht, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart/Berlin, 1934, and Ausdruckswelt, Limes, Wiesbaden, 1949.

²¹ 'Gedichte sind keine reinen Produkte. Sie zeigen Spuren ihrer Herstellung und Spuren ihrer einstigen, gegenwärtigen oder zukünftigen Benutzung: Kratzer, Risse, Flecken.' Enzensberger, 'Scherenschleifer und Poeten', p. 146. This distances Enzensberger from Benn's promotion of the poem as an 'absolute' aesthetic object

²² *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²³ Benn, 'Probleme der Lyrik', Essays, Reden, Vorträge, Limes Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1959, p. 495.

Vorgängern geprägten sinn- und stimmungsgeschwängerten, seltsam geladenen Worten. Aber auch die Slang-Ausdrücke, Argots, Rotwelsch, von zwei Weltkriegen in das Sprachbewußtsein hineingehämmert, ergänzt durch Fremdworte, Zitate, Sportjargon, antike Reminiszenzen, sind in meinem Besitz.²⁴

Although this seems a position identical to Enzensberger's²⁵, there are important differences. For Benn, in the construction of the poem, language is removed from its operation in the social world of discourse and placed in a laboratory where the poet uses it as desired:

Es ist ein Laboratorium, ein Laboratorium für Worte, in dem der Lyriker sich bewegt. Hier modelliert, fabriziert er Worte, öffnet sie, sprengt, zertrümmert sie, um sie mit Spannungen zu laden, deren Wesen dann durch einige Jahrzehnte geht [...] Silben werden psychoanalysiert, Diphthonge umgeschult, Konsonanten transplantiert. Für ihn [den Lyriker] ist das Wort real und magisch, ein moderner Totem.²⁶

Benn reduces the social utterance to its smallest constituent parts, the word, the syllable, the consonant, and operates on them within an asocial, ahistorical space, the metaphorical laboratory. Language is taken from society, appropriated, and then returned in a self-contained, aesthetic, asocial form. The word is foregrounded, not the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 518.

²⁵ See Reinhold Grimm, 'Montierte Lyrik', in Schickel (ed), Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, pp. 19-39. In this pioneering essay, written after the publication of verteidigung der wölfe but before Enzensberger's essays on poetics, Grimm claims that Enzensberger's work at this time follows closely Benn's example: '[D]ie Übereinstimmung dieser Lyriktheorie mit den untersuchten Gedichten ist frappierend', p. 36. However, by placing Enzensberger's early poems so firmly in the tradition of Benn, Grimm neglects to examine the commitments implicit in Enzensberger's writing to social and political change.

²⁶ Benn, Ausdruckswelt, pp. 118-19.

phrase or utterance, and made something magical, a totem. A position further from that of the young Enzensberger is difficult to imagine. The difference in methodology is equivalent to the Saussurian distinction between langue and parole, with Benn trying to seal off his poems from the world of the parole, of the spoken utterance.²⁷ In Enzensberger's work, language is never completely removed from the region of its utterance; it is appropriated and transposed into new areas, new combinations, in order to throw light onto its social operation, how it functions in the world of discourse to allow the maintenance of existing power structures. The word is never made into a totem. For Enzensberger, poems

können jeden Gestus annehmen außer einem einzigen: dem, nichts und
niemanden zu meinen, Sprache an sich und selig in sich selbst zu sein.²⁸

Enzensberger denies the possibility of a poetic language free from the social uses to which the words selected and written on the page have been subjected. The use of language is always within a social history of utterance - 'Es gibt kein Sprechen, das ein absolutes Sprechen wäre'.²⁹ The complex linguistic realm constituted by the poem is not part of a distanced, aesthetic sphere; it is not divorced from reference to the world of everyday objects and events in which the language is actually used.³⁰ The world in which Enzensberger finds himself situated is the world of the 'Kulturindustrie' in which everyone is now located, the world of Hiroshima, Budapest and Algeria, of city traffic and the jukebox, of creeping industrialisation.³¹ The role of the poem is to use language

²⁷ See Ferdinand Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, Duckworth, London, 1990, pp. 18-20.

²⁸ Enzensberger, 'Scherenschleifer und Poeten', p. 147.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

³⁰ 'Ich kann, wenn ich einen Vers mache, nicht reden, ohne von etwas zu reden. Und dieses Etwas, so gut wie die Sprache, die davon spricht, ist mein Material.' Ibid., pp. 144-45.

³¹ Ibid., p. 145.

in as effective a way as possible to reveal the truth about local and global politics, about social affairs and about the operations of the 'Kulturindustrie':

Wenn es nach mir ginge - und soweit es nach mir geht - , ist es die Aufgabe des Gedichts, Sachverhalte vorzuzeigen, die mit anderen, bequemeren Mitteln nicht vorgezeigt werden können, zu deren Vorzeigung Bildschirme, Leitartikel, Industriemessen nicht genügen. Indem sie Sachverhalte vorzeigen, können Gedichte Sachverhalte ändern und neue hervorbringen. Gedichte sind also nicht Konsumgüter, sondern Produktionsmittel, mit deren Hilfe es dem Leser gelingen kann, Wahrheit zu produzieren.³²

This statement is of great importance in an assessment of Enzensberger's initial poetic position. The task of a poem is to pinpoint and communicate certain realities in everyday life which are beyond the capabilities of any other medium. Enzensberger acknowledges the social significance of other media for the communication and distribution of information but their nature does not permit the conditions for the production of truth. By implication, the poem succeeds in allowing a social space in which the discourse, around which and out of which truth is produced in contemporary society, can be examined and held up against events in the world to grant the reader insights which would otherwise be unavailable. When the writer critically manipulates a word or phrase, the effect of this on the society, which allowed the production of the original utterance, can be of a political nature. The poem has at its command a linguistic and rhetorical arsenal comprising metaphor, hyperbole, irony and other modes³³ which can operate on the discourses used to maintain the social relations of power in order to free a space for the production of truth. The poem is not only located within the social use of language, but it is subject to the history of the usage of that language. The truth produced by the poem is, for Enzensberger, always

³² Ibid., pp. 146-47.

³³ See also Enzensberger, 'Weltsprache der modernen Poesie', Einzelheiten II. Poesie und Politik, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1970, pp. 12-13.

contingent, existing as part of a process and not fixed in value. This is because the poem itself can never escape its own contingency, dependent as it is on the use of language in the social utterances around it. This reinforces the sense of historicity in Enzensberger's poetics: if, over time, a poem loses its capacity to enable the production of truth, it should be discarded. Poems should not be preserved any longer than they can fulfil their function as tools, as useful objects - 'Sie gehören nicht unter Glasstürze und Vitrinen.'³⁴

Enzensberger is frustratingly vague on how a poem can achieve social change – representing reality in its true light is a long way from changing that reality – and on the relationship of poetry to the 'Kulturindustrie'. In an attempt to distance poetry from the operations of the 'Kulturindustrie', he asserts that poems are de facto not 'Konsumgüter'³⁵: although poetry must be rooted in everyday life, it must offer a critique of social reality. He appears to be implying here that poetry cannot be consumed easily, that is, read superficially and discarded. This is an argument, close to Adorno's, in favour of a difficult poetry, but Enzensberger is careful here to emphasise the need to attract readers: poetry must be enjoyable to read, but, because the reality that poems deal with is so complex, poetry must be 'ein schwieriges Vergnügen'.³⁶ What is clear is that, for Enzensberger, the poem takes its place in a scene of

³⁴ Enzensberger, 'Scherenschleifer und Poeten', p. 146. See also Enzensberger, 'Weltsprache der modernen Poesie', p. 7: 'In Bewegungen und Gegenbewegungen, Manifesten und Antimanifesten ist der Begriff des Modernen ermüdet. Seine Energie hat sich verbraucht. Trübe dient er heute der Werbung fürs Bestehende, gegen das er einst spregende Kraft verheißen hatte. Gespenstisch ist er eingegangen in das Wörterbuch der Konsumsphäre.'

³⁵ See also Enzensberger, 'Weltsprache der modernen Poesie', p. 23: 'Daß das Gedicht keine Ware ist, dieser Satz ist keineswegs eine idealistische Phrase. Von Anfang an war die moderne Poesie darauf aus, es dem Gesetz des Marktes zu entziehen. Das Gedicht ist die Antiware schlechthin.'

³⁶ Ibid., p. 147. See also Enzensberger's defence of 'difficult' poetry in 'Weltsprache der modernen Poesie', pp. 24-25: 'Der Vorwurf, sie seien unverständlich, macht die Poeten zu Sündenböcken für die Entfremdung, so als läge es nur an ihnen, sie über Nacht zu beheben.'

communicative action, for truth exists only in a social situation. The poem cannot be the supreme self-contained and monologic form of artistic expression suggested by Benn: its status as a producer of truth means that poems 'müssen [...] an jemand gerichtet, für jemand geschrieben sein'.³⁷

The poems in verteidigung der wölfe are addressed to the general public in the Federal Republic and are intended to raise the level of consciousness in Germany about the political and social settlement in the years of the 'Wirtschaftswunder'. The real intention of the volume is contained in one of the poems, 'anweisung an sisypchos', in which the addressee is instructed:

lab dich an deiner ohnmacht nicht,
sondern vermehre um einen zentner
den zorn in der welt, um ein gran.³⁸

The book is divided into three sections featuring 'freundliche', 'traurige' and 'böse gedichte' respectively and it is in the final section that the writer most strongly attacks the Federal Republic. The sequence of the sections is important. It depicts a journey which begins with poetic representations of pastoral and mythical scenes, moves through a series of poems lamenting the general reduction in scope in modern society for human expression, and ends with discursively complex pieces which attack more pointedly conditions in the contemporary Federal Republic. Although the early, pastoral poems offer an idyllic counterpoint to the Federal Republic, dominated by consumerism, militarism and the 'Kulturindustrie', the order of sections in the volume suggests that this is not an accessible alternative. The journey undertaken by the reader following the sequence is analogous to an irreversible fall from grace. The 'friendly' poems act not as a flight from contemporary life but as a metaphoric illustration of what

³⁷ Enzensberger, 'Scherenschleifer und Poeten', p. 147.

³⁸ Enzensberger, 'anweisung an sisypchos', verteidigung der wölfe, p. 70. The reference to Sisyphus suggests that Enzensberger doubts the effectiveness of this project of consciousness-raising.

has been lost with the development of modern society.³⁹

In a number of 'friendly' poems there is a juxtaposition of pastoral and industrial images. In the poem, 'april', the lyric voice finds an area in which pleasure is possible in the contemporary world in a space somehow between the technologies of power belonging to industry and the military:

zwischen mürrischen silos
zwischen pulvermühlen und hauptquartieren
in triest in cadiz
unter hafenkränen in göteborg
wo immer wir spielen
ist ein wald von oliven
ein reicher fischgrund
eine bucht aus silbernem schlick
eine lichtung voll moos
ein hugel mit wilden kirschen⁴⁰

In this poem Enzensberger composes a fictional landscape, a geographical composite of several European naval ports where any differences in history and culture between these important industrial and military sites are elided, leaving the indistinguishable common

³⁹ It would be misleading to see Enzensberger as an uncomplicated champion of pastoralism, despite his use in many early poems of images from the natural world as positive counterpoints to the 'Kulturindustrie'. See Enzensberger, 'Genie als Karikatur', Texte und Zeichen, 1957, 1, p. 90, a review of Henry Miller's travel book, Der Koloß von Maroussi. Enzensberger criticises Miller's rejection of technological culture, maintaining that such a wholesale dismissal of contemporary society comes close to an unarticulated hostility to civilisation and to a reactionary attitude towards culture. As with his critical acceptance of the existence of the realities of the film industry discussed in Chapter One, he stresses in this review the importance of coming to terms with the actuality of contemporary society and the inadequacy and ignorance of failure to do so.

⁴⁰ Enzensberger, 'april', verteidigung der wölfe, p. 8.

features of post-war Europe: military and industrial interests. In this landscape it is nevertheless possible to achieve a position which allows the opportunity for play. In other poems, nature is represented as an area in which any communication with the counter-site of modern man is excluded: 'zikade zuwenig? zikade zuviel?/wer zählt die stimmen'⁴¹ and 'wie ein unbewohnter stern/riecht die erde'.⁴² In the poem, 'sieg der weichseln', the morello cherry trees help to provoke an anarchic overturning of the everyday routine of the preachers, ticket inspectors and stokers, until 'seufzend verbergen die metzger sich/vor dem wilden auge der unschuld'.⁴³

Alongside the idyllic poems in the 'freundliche gedichte', Enzensberger explores the possibility of genuine human expression in an alienated society. In 'telegrammschalter null uhr zwölf', a poem which is composed solely of juxtaposed discourses and quotation, the lover's discourse cannot move beyond the repetition of 'mi dulce amor/mi muy dulce amor'. Similarly, the condolences offered after a death in 'letztwillige verfügung' also stay within formulaic phrases and euphemisms: 'spricht die gebete ins telefon, aber schneidet den draht ab'⁴⁴ – here the discourse of prayer is lost in the machine, and never meets its intended recipient. Beneath these constricted transmissions, no sign of original human expression is discernible – on these occasions the 'Kulturindustrie' seems to exclude genuine communication and the medium really is the message. Each word has its price: 'hier gilt allein/die harte poetik fester tarife'.⁴⁵ The telegram operates here as a synecdoche for the wider controls of newer communication media on language and human utterance. The poem exists only on the level of contrasting discourses: Enzensberger does not use a lyric subject to assimilate the disparate discourses. The poem is dominated by impersonal technologies of

⁴¹ 'zikade', *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴² 'für lot, einen makedonischen hirtten', *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴³ 'sieg der weichseln', *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁴ 'letztwillige verfügung', *ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁵ 'telegrammschalter null uhr zwölf', *ibid.* p. 18.

communication with the clear implication that these technologies limit severely the possibility of authentic expression. The difficulty of authentic human expression in a world dominated by the 'Kulturindustrie' is a theme explored again in 'call it love'. The adoption of the English word, 'love', brings in its wake connotations of so many songs and films from popular culture and suggests a commercialised and inauthentic use of language. The poem, however, shows the appearance of love as subversive, overturning the previous structures of power.⁴⁶

Enzensberger is more pessimistic in his group of 'traurige gedichte'. In 'fremder garten' the balance between nature and industry is shown to be disturbed to the extent that, as in 'Louisiana Story', nature is dying out under the encroachments of contemporary civilisation.⁴⁷ Phrases associated with the public transport system are used in 'aschermittwoch'⁴⁸ and 'bitte einsteigen türen schließen'⁴⁹ to lament the absence of a non-functional language of transcendence in public discourse.

It is in the final group of 'böse gedichte', however, that the poet isolates the way that these interlocking technologies function to help in the control of the citizen by powerful groups in the Federal Republic. The operations of the 'Kulturindustrie' are directly attacked in the poem, 'bildzeitung', with its critical analysis of the language and social effects of this tabloid newspaper. The poem is a montage composed from various discourses, from vocabulary associated with printing, from fairy tales, and from newspaper jargon, amongst others. These discourses are then juxtaposed in the poem to draw attention to their oppressive effects and thus to subvert them. In this way, the poem works as a site within the 'Kulturindustrie' from which its discourses can be

⁴⁶ 'call it love', *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁷ 'fremder garten', *ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁸ 'aschermittwoch', *ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

⁴⁹ 'bitte einsteigen türen schließen', *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

undermined in heterotopian fashion. The poem thus assumes the role of enacting surrogate political action.⁵⁰

The structure of the text is based on the poet's identification of the three main aspirations of the newspaper's readership - to be rich, to be beautiful, to be strong – which correspond to the traditional three wishes offered in fairy tales. The first stanza is aimed at the ordinary worker who dreams of gaining great wealth, designated as 'markenstecher uhrenkleber', a wordplay on two routines which dominate the organisation of the worker's life, punching the clock (die Kontrolluhr stechen), and saving purchased pension stamps in a book (Marken kleben). The constituent parts of these phrases are divided and then reassembled in a dislocated form. This is a linguistic analogy for the process of dehumanisation, where the worker is treated as a functioning part in a larger whole, as well as an attack on the linguistic manipulation of the representations of reality in the media, which contribute to the alienation of the worker.⁵¹ The next lines refer to the language of sport, ('der Mittelstürmer'), and hinge upon the use of the word 'geköpft', which conflates two separate meanings, to head the ball and to behead someone. The discourse of football and its attendant betting industry, with the power to make someone amazingly rich, is thus connected by the wordplay with the Persian tale of the dowry of Turandot, in which suitors who failed to solve riddles were beheaded. The poet suggests that the failure of the worker to decode the vanity of the get-rich-quick discourse of the newspaper (and by extension, of the 'Kulturindustrie' as a whole) results in surrender to the world of work, minimal reward and a rhetoric which encourages irrational expenditure in the hope of winning

⁵⁰ 'bildzeitung', *ibid.*, pp. 46-47. In a later note, Enzensberger declared that, like the whole volume, the poem expresses above all the particular feeling of helplessness experienced at that time: 'Organisiertes politisches Handeln schien damals ausgeschlossen: die mittelbaren materiellen Bedürfnisse des "Wiederaufbaus" setzten sich gleichsam naturwüchsig gegen die "Vernunft" durch. Das Gedicht hat natürlich recht behalten. Umso schlimmer für das Gedicht.' Enzensberger in Hilde Domin (ed), Nachkrieg und Unfrieden. Gedichte als Index 1945-1970, Luchterhand, Darmstadt/Neuwied, 1970, p. 36.

⁵¹ See Koepke, 'Mehrdeutigkeit in Hans Magnus Enzensbergers bösen Gedichten', The German Quarterly, 1971, November, 44 (3), p. 347.

the pools. The result leaves the workers as far from their goal as the beheaded princes in the tale of Turandot. The stanza ends with the employment of another form of discourse, the phrase 'tischlein deck dich', taken from the Märchen of the Grimm brothers. This imperative belongs to a tale in which normal physical laws are suspended; here the poet's use of quotation functions as an ironic reminder that these laws cannot be broken merely on the occasion of the utterance of a magical phrase. The first stanza opens and closes with the words 'du wirst reich sein', and utilises a technique of montage from the sources of fantasy and fairy tale to imply that the newspaper is organised as a rhetoric of untruth. The readers, like Turandot's princes, fail to solve the linguistic puzzles and fall. Power lies with certain key individuals like the 'Mittelstürmer' and with the manipulators of capital and hope, the betting industry.

The second stanza follows an almost identical structure, and is based on the desire to be beautiful. The stanza opens with another word-montage, which dislocates usual terms; here the typist is merged with the manicurist, with the resulting hybrids indicating the powerless position of women readers in the working world and the reduction of women to mere beautiful function. The site of power, in the first stanza inhabited by the centre-forward, is here occupied by the figure of the producer, who makes use of the position to exploit for sexual gain the depicted female desire for beauty. Enzensberger writes that at the will of the producer, 'wird die druckerschwärze salben/zwischen schenkeln grober raster', suggesting that in the grids of lines made by the printer's ink sexual desire can be patterned, with the implication that sexuality is, in the world created by the tabloid, as much a discursive construction as the desire to be rich or beautiful. Again, the poet incorporates lines from Grimm, 'eselin streck dich', to underline the stanza's linking of the desire for beauty with stupidity. The female reader of the newspaper is represented as a 'mißgewählter wechselbalg'; the pun is made on the winners of beauty contests who are elected as Miss ****, and who are at the same time wrongly elected. The 'wechselbalg' refers literally to someone whose skin is changed, and alludes to the make-up and construction of the surface identity of women in society. The changeling is substituted for a human child, traditionally by the fairies, but in the poem the pressure of the newspaper establishes women's desire for a change in identity.

After the concentration on the individual desires for wealth and beauty, Enzensberger uses a similar structure of montage to explore the wishes of a whole people for political power. The familiar introductory address consisting of a dislocation of terms is based on the words, 'Stimmenvieh' and 'Sozialpartner', which refer to the process of treating the electorate as a herd of cattle to be canvassed, implying that ordinary people play no real role in the Federal Republic's political system, despite its official status as a democracy. It also refers to the idea of the compromise in power between conflicting political interests involved in the rebuilding of the western part of Germany after 1945. The new linguistic forms draw attention to the notion of the voters as an uncritical herd, partners with those in power and complicit in allowing their democratic rights to be reduced to the capacity to cast a vote. This has little real political effect, merely maintaining the president as the location of real power. The references to boxing gloves and to the hangman reveal the darker side of the hegemonic project of the politicians: behind the democratic façade lies the threat of physical violence. Political power is reduced to the capacity for using force, although as long as the sites of power are not contested, the cudgel remains in the sack! Through its support for the status quo, the newspaper contributes to the failure of the electorate to gain access to real power. In a juxtaposition of references to sport and technology, the president is portrayed as a car driver steering with boxing gloves; presidential power is shown to be based on force, and clumsy – it would have great difficulty in steering contemporary society in the right direction.

The consequences of the ideology of the newspaper is described in the final stanza, which shows a change in the structure employed in the previous three sections. If the first three stanzas attacked the Bild-Zeitung by parodying its assimilation of reductive languages and empty promises, in which the repetitive structure mirrored the unchanging, daily editions devoid of critical content and organised around a consistent reiteration of promises as formal principle, the concluding lines demonstrate a new method of criticism. The language of desire is reabsorbed and turned against the reader - one is now 'reich' but in pay-slips and lies, 'stark' humiliated, and 'schön' besmeared

with the waste products of contemporary society, parking tickets, sweat and fallout.

Although the object of attack is ostensibly the newspaper, 'das leichentuch/aus rotation und betrug', the poet's anger is aimed as much at the reader of the newspaper who cannot decipher its manipulative language and who consequently becomes the victim of a society based on linguistic deception - 'lohnstreifen und lügen [...] /aus nikotin und verleumdung'. Language is connected in this poem with the production of desire and is deeply conservative in that it operates to maintain the status quo; if this linguistic deception fails, force remains the likely alternative. The poem uses linguistic means to disclose the function of the newspaper and succeeds in highlighting the manipulation of language in the media. In this sense, it is part of a project to enlighten readers in the Federal Republic about the nature of popular cultural forms.

The rejection of ordinary life in the contemporary Federal Republic is unremitting in the 'böse' poems. From the first of the group of seventeen poems, 'geburtsanzeige', to the final lines of 'verteidigung der wölfe gegen die lämmer', the poet attacks all social technologies which result in the continuing powerlessness of the population.

Enzensberger does not chronicle how German society developed into its contemporary alienated form, but describes how the citizen is born into an already fully exploited condition. The child in 'geburtsanzeige' is thrown into the world, where it can only adopt a passive existence, and is 'verraten und verkauft/[...] verzettelt und verbrieft/[...] versichert und vertan/[...] verworfen und verwirkt/[...] verbucht verhängt verstrickt/[...] verraten und verkauft'.⁵² The notice of birth, another sign placed in the discursive space of a newspaper, is an announcement of the inability of the subject in contemporary society to achieve any effective resistance against oppressive social forces. The repetition of the prefix ver- represents the powers acting against the passive object, not even named as a child or baby, but as 'das bündel'. There is no hope of change, as 'die zukunft ist vergriffen und gedrillt'. The announcement of birth places the subject inside the dehumanised world, from which not even the poem can act as

⁵² Enzensberger, 'geburtsanzeige', verteidigung der wölfe, pp. 65-66.

redemptive, as it states in self-reference, 'mit unerhörter schrift die schiere zeit beschreibt'.

If the powerless subject were given a voice, it would ask the question raised in 'option auf ein grundstück', which begins

warum war, als ich zur welt kam, der wald schon verteilt?
warum standen fest tarif und kataster?⁵³

The title, taken from the discourse of property law, refers to another quest for a free space in modern society. The poem proceeds as a dialogue between the voice of the subject, characterised by its expression of wish and desire, and the utterances of authority in the post-war world, which act as a force of wish-denial. The structure is based on the conflict between these two discourses, which are separated by the employment of an italic script for the voice of power. The desires of the subject are utopian, namely for simple, natural objects and for timeless ways of living, and for corresponding forms of artistic expression. These wishes are denied by the more realistic, ruthless answering voice:

ich wünsche, ich wünsche mit ziegenhirten im regen zu kauern
und mich mit ballerinen und korbmachern zu besprechen.
bete zu den kybernetischen göttern, erwirb
raketen, börsenblätter und brillen.

es behagt mir aber, mit einer chimäre zu den lotofen zu rudern
und calvados mit kutschern und komponisten zu trinken.
verschrotte lieber die friese, die orgeln, stich
die kontrolluhr, zieh den asbestanzug über, schieß!

⁵³ 'option auf ein grundstück', *ibid.*, p. 68.

The denial of the utopian wishes of the subject also includes advice about how to survive, with an emphasis on the acquisition of real power in the symbolic form of military weapons, certificates of capital and glasses, to ensure a change in perception. The traditions of art, according to the conflict depicted in the poem, are useless in the face of the routines of the factory system. The dialectic of wish and denial in the poem is ended by the intervention of the discourse of authority amid threats of violence:

ich, ich wünsche brot und nüsse mit meinen gästen zu teilen
und mein leben sorgfältig auszulegen wie eine
schluß jetzt! kreuzverhör, ratenzahlung,
gaskammer oder gehorsam, genüg deiner wahlpflicht.

ich wünsch saboteur! es behagt mir feigling!
mein leben sorgfältig auszulegen
wie eine sammlung von schönen kupferstichen
auf den kühlen fliesen im sommerhaus.⁵⁴

The subject of the poem faces a linked network of forces, which ensure obedience to the existing organisation of power relations. The mundane system of payment by instalments is as much a part of this disciplining process as the more violent methods of cross-examination and the gas chamber in the poem, the technologies used by the National Socialists for mass murder. The democratic system is not considered an effective form of resistance to the inhumanity of contemporary society: the otherwise negative voice of authority encourages the citizen in his or her duty to vote, thereby implying that the current electoral system merely upholds the oppression of the subject. Revealingly, Enzensberger hints that freedom can only be realised in an aesthetic form, rather than in the political sphere: freedom is the liberty to display (or interpret) one's life like fine copperplate engravings. The poem moves completely within the problematic of discursive power and liberty: from the title, which utilises contemporary

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

legal discourse concerning property rights, through the conflict between the poles of wish and denial, to end with the metaphoric desire for a written space, the aesthetic engraving in copper.⁵⁵

In several poems Enzensberger explores the role of scientific progress in structuring contemporary societies. In the poem 'lehrgedicht über den mord', with its Brechtian title, the German state is shown to be the contemporary controller of the right to kill and has absorbed into its field of operation science, technology and the media, which act as a network of potential violence against the individual. Without equivocation, Enzensberger charges the state with the provision of the disciplining technologies mentioned in previous poems, the gas chambers and prison bars. Added to this list, and thereby implicating scientific research in the network of force, is the metal cobalt, which can be used in the steel industry, but is more ominous in its isotopic form discharged as a by-product of nuclear reactors. Enzensberger suggests that, in the period of economic growth enjoyed by the rebuilt Federal Republic, the state has not deviated from the methods used in the identification, classification and oppression of the subject practised under National Socialism. The poet condenses the bureaucratic technology of surveillance, in the form of passport visas, with the identifying tattoos and the marks of torture left on the body by the state violence of the Third Reich. The contemporary German state, it would seem, draws on scientific research to operate a technology of violence in order to maintain its power.

Although Enzensberger speaks of the potential of poetry to challenge the discourse of contemporary society, and wryly gives one of the 'böse gedichte' the title 'goldener

⁵⁵ The struggle for power between the subject and the structures of authority is continued in such poems as 'security risk', verteidigung der wölfe, p. 73 and 'auf der flucht erschossen', verteidigung der wölfe, p. 76, whose titles employ phrases from civil police and military discourse. Both poems also have in common the motif of the public transport system as a social space, but one whose technological nature allows it a metonymic function as a representation of the modern large-scale network of social control. Both poems explore the futility of anarchic acts of escape.

schnittmusterbogen zur poetischen wiederaufrüstung'⁵⁶, resistance to the structures of power is more likely to be ensured through the use of other resources. To challenge the 'schütterer wölfe'⁵⁷ who make history, the poet advises a pragmatic approach:

lies keine oden, mein sohn, lies die fahrpläne:
sie sind genauer. roll die seekarten auf,
eh es zu spät ist. sei wachsam, sing nicht.⁵⁸

The poet talks of a day to come in which there will be a return to the procedures used under National Socialism of the classification and marking of dissenters, when it will be important to adopt the nature of a chameleon to avoid such tagging. Again, the poet writes not of the physical nature of power on the subject, but of the sign systems that mark its operation in society. He suggests that although language helps to maintain the status quo, an awareness of linguistic manipulation is not enough for the reader to be able to achieve social change. Resistance is only possible through specific forms of strategic action:

wut und geduld sind nötig,
in die lungen der macht zu blasen
den feinen tödlichen staub, gemahlen
von denen, die viel gelernt haben,
die genau sind, von dir.⁵⁹

One of the 'friendly' poems, 'utopia', describes the overthrow of the present system with the replacement of a nonsense world in which play, love and joy become the

⁵⁶ 'goldener schnittmusterbogen zur poetischen wiederaufrüstung', *ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

⁵⁷ 'ratschlag auf höchster ebene', *ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵⁸ 'ins lesebuch für die oberstufe', *ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

values:

die liebe
wird polizeilich gestattet,
ausgerufen wird eine amnestie
für die sager der wahrheit.
[....]
wie eine meuterei
bricht das glück, wie ein löwe aus.⁶⁰

Enzensberger suggests, however, that this image of utopia remains unrealisable in contemporary society. The network of disciplining technologies depicted in the 'böse gedichte' rules out the realisation of any utopian project. Moreover, in several poems Enzensberger voices his despair about his ability to enlighten ordinary Germans about the true nature of the Federal Republic. He implicates the whole of society in his judgement of the contemporary German state as composed of 'henkern'.⁶¹ In poems such as 'konjunktur', 'sozialpartner in der rüstungsindustrie', and, most famously, in 'verteidigung der wölfe gegen die lämmer', he makes the case that the continuation of oppression requires the complicity of the entire population, despite the 'lambs' claim to be nothing more than victims:

was gefällt euch nicht an päpsten?
was guckt ihr blöd aus der wäsche
auf den verlogenen bildschirm?

[....] es gibt
viel bestohlene, wenig diebe; wer
applaudiert ihnen denn, wer
steckt die abzeichen an, wer

⁶⁰ 'utopia', verteidigung der wölfe, p. 26.

⁶¹ 'lehrgedicht über den mord', *ibid.*, p. 75.

lechzt nach der lüge?⁶²

Although this poem is deliberately provocative in its declaration of sympathy with the 'wolves' rather than with their all-too-willing victims, Enzensberger uses other poems to highlight the relationship between the ordinary citizen and the oppressive structures of power. The worker is indispensable to the maintenance of these structures, and is absorbed into the system with lies and bait:

ihr glaubt zu essen
aber das ist kein fleisch
womit sie euch füttern
das ist köder, das schmeckt süß
[....]
sie sitzen geduldig am rhein,
am potomac, an der beresina,
an den flüssen der welt.
sie weiden euch. sie warten.⁶³

The ordinary German, the 'kleinbürger, büttel, assessor, stift'⁶⁴, is accused of doing little to resist co-option into the systematic remilitarisation of the state:

eigener handschellen schmied,
geburtshelfer eigenen tods,
konditor des gifts, das dir selbst
wird gelegt werden.⁶⁵

⁶² 'verteidigung der wölfe', *ibid.*, p. 90.

⁶³ 'konjunktur', *ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

⁶⁴ 'sozialpartner in der rüstungsindustrie', *ibid.*, p. 84.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

This disgust for the opportunistic, naïve 'Kleinbürger', complicit in an ultimately exploitative system, resurfaces in 'an einen mann in der trambahn'.⁶⁶ Enzensberger's poem begins with an expression of complete contempt for the appearance and cultural habits of the typical Kleinbürger:

dich gibts zu oft. im treppenhaus dein blick
hinter schaltern ist überall vor den kinos,
ein spiegel, mit gieriger seife verschmiert.
und auch du (ach nicht einmal haß!) drehst dich
zu den nußbaumkommoden fort, zu sophia loren,
gehst heim voller schweiß, voller alpen-
veilchen und windeln.⁶⁷

The poem accuses such a figure of failing to appreciate what is of true value in the world:

was weißt du denn,
wie die welt riecht, wie der lachs steigt
in lappland, der duft der scala,
der süße staub, mein alter lucrez
mit marginalien von der hand diderots [...] ⁶⁸

Enzensberger sets against the pleasures offered by the 'Kulturindustrie' the wonders of nature and of 'high' culture in a manner which leaves him open to charges of snobbism and elitism. Yet as the poem progresses, the distance that the lyrical subject wishes to

⁶⁶ 'an einen mann in der trambahn', *ibid.*, pp. 77-79.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

preserve between his noble existence and the everyday life of the Kleinbürger is less and less apparent. The subject of the poem is haunted by the apparition of the 'mann in der trambahn' - 'du nistest dich ein in meinen versen,/du schnürst durch meinen traum'⁶⁹ – until the subject is forced to recognise that, even as the Kleinbürger is depicted putting on military uniform and reaching for his pistol, he is still the poet's 'stinkender bruder'.⁷⁰

The ambiguous nature of Enzensberger's attitude towards what he perceives as the conformist majority in the Federal Republic, which is highlighted in this poem, has important consequences for his poetics. The aim of the 'böse gedichte', to increase the amount of rage in the world and consequently to provoke ordinary people to question the structures of power, seems futile as the poet's despair towards the general population becomes more evident. The prospects of real change acceptable to the author appear out of the question in verteidigung der wölfe. The book closes with Enzensberger's pessimism towards his chances of raising the consciousness of the 'lämmer': 'ihr/ändert die welt nicht'.⁷¹

There are signs of Enzensberger's increasing pessimism regarding the ability of poetry to challenge the status quo in the two volumes that follow verteidigung der wölfe, namely landessprache (1960) and blindenschrift (1964), together with the development of environmental concerns and a marked catastrophic tone.⁷² To accompany his second

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 78.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

⁷¹ Enzensberger, 'verteidigung der wölfe', ibid., p. 91.

⁷² Enzensberger's pessimism in the early 1960s is closely linked to his growing fears about the probability of nuclear warfare involving both German states, and his perception that nothing had been learned from the systematic genocide in the name of the German state at Auschwitz. The very existence of nuclear weapons, he argues, suspends all democratic rights. See Enzensberger, 'Reflexionen vor einem Glaskasten', Politik und Verbrechen, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1964, pp. 7-39.

volume, landessprache, he published not an announcement of how the poems should function within a society of discourse, but operating instructions for the book which include the comments:

1. diese gedichte sind gebrauchsgegenstände, nicht geschenkartikel im engeren sinne.[....]

4. zur erregung, vervielfältigung und ausbreitung von ärger sind diese texte nicht bestimmt. der leser wird höflich ermahnt, zu erwägen, ob er ihnen beipflichten oder widersprechen möchte.⁷³

The first point repeats Enzensberger's concept, inherited from Brecht, of the poem as an object with a defined function. The poem exists to secure an aim, it is a tool to be used, not an object to be consumed. This is, however, a far vaguer idea of the operation of the poem in society than that given in the announcement published with verteidigung der wölfe, which allowed a more specific definition of the poem operating as a form of textual intervention within the society of discourse. There is no attempt to elaborate on the exact nature of the poem in terms of its reception as described in the earlier volume, with its emphasis on public space(s), not private, patient reading. Enzensberger's strategic anger and provocation of the reader has been replaced with the polite exhortation to the reader to consider whether or not to assent to the ideas made in the poems. Although the poems are seen as tools, it is not made clear which ends Enzensberger has in mind for them, other than to aid in presenting a case with which the reader can agree or disagree.

Direct quotation from literary sources was scarce in verteidigung der wölfe in comparison to the montage of quotations from other discourses. Again, this could be taken as part of Enzensberger's stated campaign to reach a new public and not allow the

⁷³ Enzensberger, 'gebrauchsanweisung', landessprache, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1960, p. 97.

book the 'patient' reception more typical of the poetry reading audience. The 'gebrauchsanweisung' to landessprache include a list of 'motti' taken from classical and baroque literature, which precede a number of poems. This indicates a new emphasis on the poem's place in a diachronic tradition of literature. Previously, Enzensberger had stressed the synchronic nature of the poem as a literary text within the world of diverse contemporary discourses. The poems are no longer collected on the principle of being textual montages of disparate discourses, released into a public space in order to provoke anger in the readership. This has been replaced by the idea of the poem as belonging to a literary tradition. It is acknowledged that the poems are more likely to be read, like traditional poetry, by a solitary reader rather than in a more public setting, despite the title of one of the sections: 'gedichte für die gedichte nicht lesen'.⁷⁴

In the long title poem that opens the volume, Enzensberger focuses on the nature of the language of the land, the 'landessprache'. This can be understood in two ways, incorporating as it does the idea of a national, and therefore German, language, appropriate to the political entity of the Federal Republic, and the concept of a natural language belonging to the physical land. Enzensberger's central theme has shifted from the exploration of the interaction of discourse and power within the framework of the disciplining technologies of the post-war German state to a heightened interest in the language of nature itself compared to the language of technological modernity in Germany. The discursive power struggle encountered on a number of occasions in verteidigung der wölfe has been largely superseded by the author's attempted retreat in search of an acceptable idea of both land and language.

He uses techniques of quotation and montage present in several poems in verteidigung der wölfe to examine the various discourses, some modern but with the majority taken from historical sources, which compose the contemporary threads of the national language. Although the poem appears fragmented and formless, it operates around the repeated use of the words 'hier' and 'wo' to question the exact location and, by

⁷⁴ Enzensberger, landessprache, pp. 15-32. A subsequent section is titled 'oden an niemand', *ibid.*, pp. 45-82.

extension, identity, of the lyrical subject. The employment of this spatial framework indicates that the search is one for a native land and thus continues Enzensberger's quest for acceptable areas in modern society which began with 'Louisiana Story' and continues through a number of poems in verteidigung der wölfe. It would be misleading to interpret this piece too literally as solely concerned with the rhetoric of space, as the central theme becomes the search for a language appropriate to this concept of place. The quest moves through a montage of question and quotation to try to define a language which fits the emptiness of the contemporary space.

The poem is preceded by a quotation from Pliny on a literary description of the people of Athens which had subsequently been lost. Enzensberger renders the Latin:

er (nämlich parrhasius) wollte sie (nämlich seine landsleute) so darstellen, wie sie ihm vorkamen: also von gescheckter art, reizbar, ungerecht, zum opportunismus neigend; dabei leicht zu beeinflussen, weichherzig, gutmütig; hochtrabend, eingebildet, gemein, blindwütig, hasenfüßig - und zwar all das auf einmal und zugleich.⁷⁵

Enzensberger clearly perceives parallels here with his own attitude towards his fellow citizens. Despite the positive descriptors 'weichherzig' and 'gutmütig', Enzensberger represents the ordinary population of the Federal Republic in a very unflattering light. His poem begins with an expression of loss and dislocation in post-war Germany:

was habe ich hier verloren,
in diesem land,
dahin mich gebracht haben meine älteren
durch arglosigkeit?
eingeboren, doch ungetrost,
abwesend bin ich hier,

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

ansässig im gemütlichen elend,
in der netten zufriedenen grube.

In this case the subject is born into a land to which he does not belong; any meaningful identity which might have been conferred on the subject by dint of being a native of this place has been lost. The opening stanza reveals more than this accidental fact of birth: the subject has been brought to this place by his elders, which moves the centre of this poem towards the problem of an inherited tradition. The stanza follows a pattern of antithesis, with the normally positive features belonging to the idea of being native, 'eingeboren', here providing no comfort. The antithesis continues with the dialectic between presence and absence: the subject does exist in this land, but is also simultaneously absent, because something has been lost without which the concept of belonging, of being born into a land, is incomplete.

In an essay written for the English journal, Encounter, some three years after the publication of this poem, Enzensberger gives grounds for thinking that what is missing from the land is a native tongue, a national language. As a result of the destruction of parts of the German language, and the misuse of many major works from the German literary tradition by the National Socialists, the post-war writer had to redefine the concept of national identity and of a language appropriate to that definition:

After the entry of the Allies, Germany was mute, in the most precise meaning of the word, a speechless country.⁷⁶

This loss of speech is one way of understanding how the lyrical subject can be both present, born into a space, and, at the same time, absent, because it is unable to participate in the linguistic life of a society, it has no means left of adequate communication. Enzensberger describes the rebuilding of a national tongue through Germany's literature over the ten years which followed the end of the Second World

⁷⁶ Enzensberger, 'In Search of the Lost Language', Encounter, 1963, 21, p. 45.

War and the defeat of National Socialism. In order to move from this mute condition, analogous to the notion of being at point zero, the 'Nullpunkt', the German population had to bring itself nearer to a full presence: 'it had to learn its own language'.⁷⁷ The state of the German language, for Enzensberger, reflects the failure of the post-war population to effect a complete break with the National Socialist corruption of the word. The poem is set not in the year of 1945, but in the Federal Republic of the 'Wirtschaftswunder', and attacks the language of contemporary Germany, which fails to allow the complete presence of the subject:

was habe ich hier? und was habe ich hier zu suchen,
in dieser schlachtschüssel, diesem schlaraffenland'
wo es aufwärts geht, aber nicht vorwärts [...]⁷⁸

The use of the technique of alliteration connects the consumption of meat, fresh from the slaughterhouse, with the maintenance of the illusion that the nation is progressing when it is in reality a never-never land. Enzensberger gives a clearer depiction of the era he is attacking through repeated employment of phrases beginning with 'wo' and incorporating objects and terms from contemporary society - this is the land of 'delikateßgeschäften', 'gewinnspanne', 'kinostühle', 'zahlungsbilanz', 'freizeit' 'tarifpartner', 'wellpappe' and 'cellophan'. It is a country whose national language has become saturated with the vocabulary of consumption, leisure and finance, as well as hollow slang and manipulative expression. The poem is patterned around the different forms of language that contribute to the complete identity of the land, of 'hier'.

Alongside the references to the networks of finance and leisure appear a large number of quotations, often changed slightly or parodied, from discourses which participate in the formation of the cultural language of the country, namely folk songs, biblical pieces and extracts from classics of the national literature. This functions to illustrate that not only is a national language rarely of a homogeneous nature, complete and timeless, but

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Enzensberger, 'landessprache', landessprache, p. 7.

that it bears the scars of its own history and adaptation. In this poem, it serves most importantly to describe the inadequacy of the current culture of the Federal Republic, as reflected in its language. According to Gotthart Wunberg,

[d]ie Parodie wird erreicht durch die Konfrontierung von Zitat auf der einen und Wirklichkeit des Alltags auf der anderen Seite. Je stärker der Kontrast zwischen Zitat und Wirklichkeit, desto stärker kommt heraus, worum es dem Autor geht: neben der äußeren Spaltung die innere Zerrissenheit zu zeigen.⁷⁹

One major source for Enzensberger is the gospel according to St. Matthew, from which the poet quotes the language of the Transfiguration in an ironic juxtaposition with the state of the modern German land:

hier ist gut sein,
wo es rückwärts und aufwärts geht,
[....]
hier laßt uns hütten bauen,
auf diesen arischen schrotthaufen,
auf diesem krächzenden parkplatz,
[....]
hier laßt uns hütten bauen,
in dieser mördergrube [....]

The physical nature of the land, on which the huts, originally intended for Jesus, Moses and Elijah, should be built, proves itself to be absurdly unsuitable. This land is an area within a technological society, composed of the dumping ground for scrap metal, and a croaking space for cars to park. However, the ground is unsuited to the language of the Transfiguration not merely because of the nature of the wasteful technological

⁷⁹ Gotthart Wunberg, 'Die Funktion des Zitats in den politischen Gedichten von Hans Magnus Enzensberger', Neue Sammlung, 1964, 4 (3), p. 275.

modernity, but also because of the recent violent history of Germany. The reference to the term, 'arisch', draws attention to the ideology of Aryan national identity promoted under National Socialism. This is reinforced by the depiction of the post-war state as a 'mördergrube', a continuation of the criminal violence of the Third Reich. This term is another biblical reference, which appears first in the Old Testament, in Jeremiah, in an assertion of the nature of sanctuary in the Temple, and is used again in St. Matthew's gospel, where it describes the den of thieves created by the moneychangers in the Temple.⁸⁰ The use of biblical quotations written into a montage with references to the Federal Republic illustrates the inadequacy of contemporary society to provide the conditions necessary for a language of transcendence..

Enzensberger also employs discourse taken from other areas in his depiction of the nature of the land, of 'hier'. The relationship between the language of a national culture, represented by the works of literature which are frequently quoted to define its identity, and the reality of the modern land, is highlighted with the incorporation of phrases taken from Rilke, Hölderlin and Heidegger. As the poem depends to a large extent on the recognition of these quotations and an understanding of their use in a new montage, the piece demands a more sophisticated, literary reading than many of the poems in verteidigung der wölfe. Although Enzensberger realises the necessity of reaching a wider audience and aims at the publication of 'gedichte für die gedichte nicht lesen', his title poem requires a familiarity with a history of the language of German national culture. After the biblical references he writes:

hiersein ist herrlich,
wo dem verbrauchten verbraucher,
und das ist das kleinere übel,
die haare ausfallen [...]

⁸⁰ See Arrigo Subiotto (ed), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Leicester German Poets, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1985, p. 81, and Wunberg, 'Die Funktion des Zitats', p. 276.

The first line quotes from the Seventh Elegy of Rilke's Duineser Elegien⁸¹, where the poet's focus of praise moves from the transcendent, angelic order to the materiality of the human world. The task, according to Rilke, becomes that of the transformation of this world into inner experience. Enzensberger's juxtaposition of this concept with the reality of the contemporary world, of the consumed consumer who suffers from hair loss, both draws attention to the emptiness of any celebration of the contemporary Federal Republic and calls into question the appositeness of the literary tradition inherited from Rilke to the formation of the contemporary language of the land.

In this employment of literary language taken from Rilke, the writer used the method of direct quotation; the effectiveness of this piece was ensured through its subsequent relocation in a new context which rendered the original phrase absurd. In Enzensberger's reception of Hölderlin in this poem, he adopts the strategy of changing the quote, thereby reversing its original meaning:

deutschland, mein land, unheilig herz der völker,
ziemlich verrufen, von fall zu fall,
unter allen gewöhnlichen leuten [....]

In this way, Hölderlin's description of the Germans as being blessed over other countries is undermined.⁸² The declaration of the great poet is contrasted with the opinion of the ordinary people of other countries who, in the light of its recent history, are able to view the German people as anything but 'heilig'. The daily events in the contemporary German state merely confirm the attitude of the outside world, according to Enzensberger. As with the use of the quotation from Rilke, the intention here is to demonstrate the division between the inherited, cultural 'landessprache' and the current

⁸¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Die siebente Elegie', Duineser Elegien. Die Sonette an Orpheus, Insel, Frankfurt am Main, 1982, p. 32.

⁸² Subiotto traces this phrase to Hölderlin's 'Gesang des Deutschen': 'O heilig Herz der Völker, o Vaterland!' See Subiotto, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 81.

state of the nation. On this point, Wunberg notes

[d]ie Antithese wird oft bereits in einem einzigen Ausdruck sichtbar: die Bilder der traditionellen Sprache werden fast durchgehend von Attributen perforiert, die die Metapher ironisieren. Und trotzdem wird durch die perforierten Wörter hindurch das Immerwährende ihrer Aussagekraft und ihres Gegenstandes, das hinter ihnen steht, nur noch deutlicher.⁸³

This also functions to cast doubt on the motives of those people who can still quote, without irony, from the German literary tradition. The employment of works belonging to the acknowledged classics of German literature by the National Socialists, to the point that such writing appeared to allow an alibi for the barbarity of the Third Reich, ensures that for later writers a critical attitude must be adopted towards the appropriation of German literary tradition. For Enzensberger, it is clear that no privileged position can be given to writers such as Hölderlin and Rilke in the quest for a national language:

How to write poetry in a language thus distorted was a question every German poet has had to answer since 1945. Literary tradition could do no more to help them than could the public or private speech of their contemporaries.⁸⁴

In addition to the exploration of the potential for the language of religion and literature within a contemporary native tongue, Enzensberger also uses discourse from other sources as the raw material of a contemporary vocabulary. He inserts quotations from folk songs and tales to illustrate that the language of the land is lacking, not only on the 'high' cultural level but also in the provision of a genuine popular culture. Again, these phrases are absorbed into the montage around the structure of 'hier' and 'wo':

⁸³ Wunberg, 'Die Funktion des Zitats', p. 276.

⁸⁴ Enzensberger, 'In Search of the Lost Language', p. 45.

hier, wo eine hand die andere kauft,
hand aufs herz, hier sind wir zuhaus [...]

The last four words are taken from the German song, 'Nordseewellen'⁸⁵, a sentimental representation of the idea of a native land. In the context of this line, it is linked with the symbolic gesture of honesty, to cross one's heart. However, the preceding line depicts how the social conditions are based on betrayal, on the trade of even the closest things, where one hand can sell the other. The repetition of the word 'hand' and the assonance of 'kauft' and 'zuhaus' undermine both the sentimental bonding suggested by the popular song and the trust in the simple honesty in the body. It is not only verbal language that can be used to deceive but also the symbolic gestures of the body can no longer be believed.

Later in the poem, Enzensberger uses the technique of parody to explore the deceptive nature of songs which seem to contribute to the identity of the nation:

wo wir uns finden wohl unter blinden,
in den schau-, kauf- und zeughäusern [...]⁸⁶

The source for the first line is the folk song, 'Kein schöneres Land', which runs, 'wo wir uns finden, wohl unter Linden'.⁸⁷ Enzensberger's parody changes the social identification with the natural world found in the original to the metaphor of living in the country of the blind, which he continues in other poems such as 'blindlings' and 'blindenschrift'.⁸⁸ The poet plays on the nature of the German language to construct

⁸⁵ See Subiotto, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 81.

⁸⁶ Enzensberger, 'landessprache', landessprache, p. 9.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ See Enzensberger, landessprache, pp. 20-21, and blindenschrift, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1964, p. 46.

compound words - the land consists of 'häuser' or houses, but these have developed into exhibition rooms, department stores and arsenals. The idea of the house as the dwelling place of the people has been expanded into a depiction of modern German society as one of display, consumption and warfare.

Enzensberger characterises contemporary Germany as a tangled network of leisure, consumption, and state power:

was habe ich hier verloren, was suche ich
und stochre in diesem unzuständigen knäuel
von nahkampfspangen, genußscheinen,
gamsbarten, schlußverkäufen, und finde nichts
als chronische, chronologisch geordnete turnhallen
und sachbearbeiter für die menschlichkeit
in den kasernen für die kasernen für die kasernen

Although this description might be used equally for other countries, its recent history makes Germany different - 'das ist ein anderes land als andere länder'.⁸⁹ An appropriate German language of the present is dependent on a process of coming to terms with the history of the nation, which is denied in this 'mördergrube':

wo der kalender sich selber abreißt vor ohnmacht und hast,
wo die vergangenheit in den müllschluckern schwelt
und die zukunft mit falschen zähnen knirscht [...] ⁹⁰

This results in an attitude to the present that suppresses history and memory: the modern German state exists 'im ewigen frühling der amnesie'.⁹¹ The vocabulary of

⁸⁹ Enzensberger, 'landessprache', *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

suffering uttered by the victims of the Third Reich is suppressed and is consequently lost to the national tongue to which it rightly belongs. At the end of the poem, the lyrical subject comes to the realisation that what is absent is a national language which can encompass the cries of the victims of Germany's history. This would be a truly appropriate form of contemporary German, and is contrasted with the inadequate language of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and of the east German party newspaper, Neues Deutschland, publications which in different ways represent the voice of the establishment in the two German states.

Enzensberger's disgust with the contemporary state of the nation and despair about his chances of using poetry to enlighten its population are the central themes of the two other long poems in landessprache. In 'schaum', the poet describes the entire world around him as one filled with 'schaum' – the same image he had used in 'Louisiana Story' to evoke the all-encompassing slime of the 'Kulturindustrie'. The poem, like 'landessprache', features a lyrical subject taking stock of contemporary Germany and attempting to distance himself from its worst aspects while searching for glimpses of a positive alternative. Again, the poet recognises himself in the faces of the fellow citizens he so despises:

hier stehe ich täglich, ein feuerschlucker wie ihr,
wie alle andern, an meiner straßenecke, von neun
bis fünf, und schlucke mühsam für zwanzig mark
mein eigenes feuer, knietief im schäumenden status quo,
unter vergasern und ampeln
[....]
loslassen! loslassen! ich bin keiner von euch
und keiner von uns [....].⁹²

The casual juxtaposition of 'vergasern' with 'ampeln' underlines Enzensberger's belief

⁹² Enzensberger, 'schaum', landessprache, pp. 35-36.

that the supposed denazification of German society and establishment of democracy in the late-1940s has been ineffective. The poem makes repeated reference to the continued presence of National Socialist elements in post-war German society, but this is only one element in a tirade of invective against the Federal Republic:

wohin mit den kommunisten? wohin mit dem,
was da hölderlin sagt und meint himmler, mit dem,
was da raketen und raten abstottert, was da filmt
und vögelt und fusioniert?⁹³

Even in these four lines one can read attacks on the Federal Republic's inability to tolerate left-wing politics, on the abuse of German literary culture by right-wingers, on state spending on rearmament, on the film industry, on predatory sexual and economic activity. This scattershot technique is typical of the poem (and the volume) as a whole and tends to conflate all elements of contemporary society of which the poet disapproves. In his tirade, everything is linked and undifferentiated – the horrors of German history, economics, politics, the 'Kulturindustrie' – and covers the country with a blanket of 'schaum'. The poem displays the poet's general and total rage, but little analytical attempt to show how everything is connected or to show any alternatives:

und wohin mit uns? wohin mit dem,
was die fußballstadien schäumend füllt
und schreit nach coca-cola und blut?⁹⁴

The only answer the poet can find is to parody advertising and investment slogans and to urge his fellow citizens to continue what they do so well, to buy up everything:

kauft geigerzähler und alte meister!

⁹³ Ibid., p. 39.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

kauft knaben auf und verrichtet an ihnen,
solange vorrat, euer gesabber!
kauft euch den montag! das meer!
kauft euch porridge und bomben [...]
kauft euch kultur und wälzt sie wie einen kaugummi
zwischen den kiefern! gründet euch schnöde schweizen!
stockt auf! warum nicht? setzt um! stellt glatt!
macht flüssig! schreibt ab! schüttet aus!⁹⁵

The reductio ad absurdum of these addresses by manufacturers and bankers to consumers draws attention to the very meaninglessness of the culture of consumption underpinning economic recovery in the Federal Republic. The poet can find nothing to fill the hollowness at the heart of society, and nothing to dissipate the 'schaum' that covers everything. The consequence of his general disgust at contemporary society forces him into a withdrawal from social interaction and heralds the futility of his attempts to enlighten the population:

ich bin keiner von uns! ich bin niemand!
finger weg! ich bin allein! laßt mich los!

ich will euch nicht ändern! vergelts gott!
das läßt mich kalt! das hat keinen zweck!⁹⁶

It comes as no surprise that the poem ends with the poet questioning the future direction that he might take. The consequence of general despair about the state of society, and about the role of poetry in effecting change, leaves a poet as committed to social change as Enzensberger at this time, if not at a dead end, then certainly

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 41.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

dislocated. This sense of inner turmoil is clear in the final poem in the volume, the third long piece, 'gewimmer und firmament', with its depiction of the split identity of the poet:

daß es ein anderer ausriefe,
ich als nicht ich, ich
als vollakademiker, ich als sucher
nach transzendenz in mülleimern und in bibeln [...]
ich als der, dem es gut geht wie jedem andern.⁹⁷

The lyrical subject lists the different, unreconcilable, sides to his personality, his 'Doppelgänger' (including 'der snob, der die butterfässer /aus den akademien rollt,'⁹⁸) and tries to ascertain his role as a poet: 'cheftexter gesucht für diese erde!'.⁹⁹ Enzensberger proposes in this poem that it is the poet's task simply to praise the world, a task possible for many others, but not for him:

gurgelnd loben sie das parma-veilchen, den busen,
das senfglas, die traktoristin,
die nike von samothrake und von cap canaveral,
pantoffeln und persianer, den fortschritt,
den schaukelstuhl, loben gott,
der am werktag frißt und am sonntag gefressen wird,
und, gegebenfalles, den beischlaf.¹⁰⁰

Enzensberger's increasing rejection of all aspects of contemporary Germany in his

⁹⁷ Enzensberger, 'gewimmer und firmament', *ibid.*, p. 85.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

poems leads him to an inability to find anything at all to praise about the immanent world. His alternative to the 'schaum' of the 'Kulturindustrie' – in his poems at least – is to seek transcendence in the timeless world of nature:

in allem was fällt, in allem,
was schwer ist, im geduldigen
materiellen gewimmel der moleküle.¹⁰¹

Of course, the stance that Enzensberger appears to take up in landessprache (and which is maintained in his subsequent volume, blindenschrift) is at odds with many of his earlier statements concerning the need to engage fully with the ramifications of the 'Kulturindustrie'. Instead of using poems as 'heterotopian' sites to explore the democratic settlement of the Federal Republic, he moves increasingly to a blanket and undifferentiated rejection of contemporary society. Several critics noted this move and bemoaned the elements of elitism and aestheticism, rather than political engagement, increasingly evident in Enzensberger's poems. Rudolf Krämer-Badoni, a persistent critic of Enzensberger, wrote in the conservative Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung:

Ich will's nicht zu ernst machen, sondern als jetziger Mann nur noch rasch anmerken, daß ich die Sachen vorziehe, die es gibt. Also Demokratie, und nicht die perfekte, denn die wär' keine mehr. Und Massendasein unter neuen, ehemals unauslebbarsten Horizonten. Und Freiheit [....]¹⁰²

Parodying Enzensberger's increasingly mannered style, he exhorts readers thus:

Lacht den lächerlichen Rezensenten aus, der euch zähneknirschend den

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁰² Rudolf Krämer-Badoni, 'Der Mensch, den es noch nicht gibt', Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 27 August 1960, reprinted in Schickel (ed), Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, pp. 72-73.

polierten Hammer preist, konsumiert die Charta vom Magnus, denn die Magna Charta der demokratischen Massengesellschaft bleibt wahrscheinlich ungedichtet.¹⁰³

This might be very true for the frustrated reader of Enzensberger's earliest volumes of poetry, but not quite the case if one turns to his cultural criticism, written at the same time. It is in his radio and journal essays that Enzensberger explores in greater detail the relationship of popular culture in the Federal Republic to the political settlement.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 73.

CHAPTER THREE:

The plebiscite of the consumers:

Einzelheiten and the politics of popular culture

Wer wissen möchte, in welcher Epoche er lebt, der braucht heutzutage nur die nächstbeste Zeitung aufzuschlagen. Er wird ihr entnehmen können: daß er sich im Zeitalter der synthetischen Faser, des Tourismus, des Leistungssportes oder des absurden Theaters befindet.¹

Enzensberger's earliest poems often enact a search undertaken by the subject of the poem for a 'heterotopia', or free space within the confines of contemporary society, permeated by the products and discourses of the 'Kulturindustrie'. This search for 'heterotopias' becomes increasingly pessimistic in the course of Enzensberger's three earliest volumes of poetry, culminating in the emotional and geographical withdrawal of the writer from the Federal Republic in blindenschrift. The essays published in the volume Einzelheiten offer a compelling counterpoint to this vain quest for freedom from the 'Kulturindustrie'. They undertake to examine the practices of the production and consumption of the products of contemporary German culture from the inside, and thus chart the negotiations of the German population with modern popular culture.

In this undertaking, Enzensberger is already distancing himself from some of Adorno's claims about the 'Kulturindustrie'. Adorno and Horkheimer's account of the production and distribution of modern culture, it is frequently pointed out, lacks historical specificity. It also fails to differentiate adequately between differing conditions of cultural consumption and to distinguish sufficiently between the varying political contexts of cultural production.² In his 'Nachbemerkung' to Einzelheiten, Enzensberger argues:

¹ Enzensberger, 'Reflexionen vor einem Glaskasten', Politik und Verbrechen, p. 18.

² See Rob Burns, 'Introduction', German Cultural Studies, p. 5.

Der große Kunsthistoriker Aby Warburg soll zu seinen Schülern gesagt haben: "Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail." So weit möchte ich nicht gehen. Doch scheint es mir geboten, den Erscheinungen näher zu treten und den Widerstand des Besonderen nicht zu scheuen.³

In his attempt to look closely at a number of key popular cultural practices in the Federal Republic, and to consider them implicitly in the context of Adorno's 'Kulturindustrie' thesis, Enzensberger can be seen to be opening up lines of enquiry that Adorno's account deliberately foreclosed. As Russell A. Berman has argued, this kind of work could lend an important impetus to the critical understanding of popular culture:

[...] the critical theory of the Frankfurt School could well reexplore a theoretical dimension which it blocked in its earliest years: the phenomenological investigation of everyday life as a locus of creativity, resistance, and emancipatory hopes.⁴

The rise of popular cultural forms, and their relationship to the post-war reconstruction of the western zones of Germany along liberal economic lines, drew criticism from across the political spectrum. Looking back on this period from the late-1970s, Jean Améry regretted the unforgiveable arrogance he and fellow cultural critics on the left had shown in their lack of understanding and failure to come to terms with the feelings and needs of ordinary people:

³ Enzensberger, 'Nachbemerkung', Einzelheiten I. Bewußtseins-Industrie, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1964, p. 207.

⁴ Berman, 'Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies', p. 24. For a discussion of phenomenological approaches to media consumption, see Joke Hermes, Reading Women's Magazines. An Analysis of Everyday Media Use, Polity, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 21-25.

Was uns geschlagen hatte, das war nicht Dummheit, sondern ein ganz unverzeihlicher Hochmut und eine noch viel unverzeihlichere Blindheit gegenüber den Sehnsüchten, Hoffnungen und Ängsten der Mitmenschen.⁵

Améry countered the traditional claims of the left, that the desires for the products of popular culture were solely due to manipulation from above, with a more detailed recognition of the historical reasons for such desires. The products of modern culture, according to Améry, were meeting real demands and contributing to an improvement in the lives of ordinary people who were justified in trying to satisfy material needs:

Wer eben sein neues Ein-Familien-Haus bezog, war nicht 'entfremdet', sondern fand heim aus der Fremde der Trümmer; wer eben in Frankreich erwachte aus der Dumpfheit des überständigen Dorflebens und die Industriekomplexe um Grenoble entstehen sah, die Arbeit schufen (und dazu Vier-Wochen-Urlaub und menschenwürdige Unterbringung), der fühlte sich nicht 'manipuliert' vom anonymen Apparat: er sah neue Horizonte sich auf tun.⁶

However, Améry's sympathetic views regarding the consumption of popular cultural products were rarely exhibited by critics at the time, and more typical is the superior tone adopted by writers such as Rudolf Hagelstange, whose article 'Endstation Kühlschrank. Maß und Vernunft frieren ein' managed both to condemn the desire for modern goods and to hint at a belief that this striving for material achievement was less worthy than struggle of a more military kind:

⁵ Jean Améry, 'In den Wind gesprochen', in Axel Eggebrecht (ed), Die zornigen alten Männer. Gedanken über Deutschland seit 1945, Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1979, p. 266.

⁶ Ibid., p. 276.

Ihr Schlachtfeld ist die Wirtschaft, ihr Heldentod der Herzinfarkt. Sie kämpfen um Kühlschränke, Volks- oder kostspieligere Wagen, um Sommervillen und Auslandsaufträge.⁷

Enzensberger's reaction to the extent of the changes in material culture in these years is complex: so often he wants to move beyond the compelling philosophical pessimism in Adorno's 'Kulturindustrie' analysis, yet finds evidence for its contemporary political relevance in the very spaces he looks to find its disproof – in the practices of ordinary Germans in the years of the 'Wirtschaftswunder'. As noted in Chapter Two, many poems contain extensive references to German Alltagskultur, often in the most disparaging terms, because of the connection he perceives between the beguiling promises of popular culture and the absence of a genuinely democratic political culture. However, it is possible to detect in his essays a growing awareness that popular culture per se is not a barrier to German democracy. Writing during a stay in Italy, he clearly finds that the mixture of popular cultural forms which he finds in everyday life actually helps to promote a political climate of freedom and sociability. After describing the dreariness and old-fashioned Kaffeehäuser of Düsseldorf, which seem to exist inside an old film – 'dieser Film, der nie reißen wird, lehrt uns das Fürchten vor der Ewigkeit der Hölle'⁸ – Enzensberger compares the modernity and vitality of life in a Roman café:

In der Pasticceria Mazzini hingegen können wir Lotterie spielen und ein Ferkel gewinnen, wir können uns wiegen, wir können telefonieren, Osterhasen und Briefmarken kaufen, heimliche Briefe abholen, den Papst loben, den Papst verspotten, unsere Kinder und Koffer aufbewahren lassen, auf den Autobus warten und den alten Radio gegen ein neues Fahrrad eintauschen. Wir können Grüße an den Doktor ausrichten lassen, flirten, streiten, Adorno lesen, Rock

⁷ Rudolf Hagelstange, 'Endstation Kühlschrank. Maß und Vernunft frieren ein', Die Kultur, 6, 112 (1958), p. 2.

⁸ Enzensberger, '...schimpfend unter Palmen', Süddeutsche Zeitung, 110, 7/8 May, 1960, p. 67.

`n' Roll spielen, Kaffee rösten lassen, einen Kontrakt abschließen, über die Dreifaltigkeit und die Boxkunst disputieren. Wir können in Sophias Busen blicken, ein Faß Wein oder ein Taxi bestellen, Gedichte schreiben, den Steuereinnnehmer bestechen, Wetten abschließen, Kundstufen veranstalten, Gerüchte aufschnappen, mit Kutschen saufen und mit Billigung aller Heiligen die Democrazia Cristiana uns Fegfeuer wünschen. In unserm Café an der Ecke haben wir Gesellschaft.⁹

As this kind of popular modernity is so enthusiastically received by Enzensberger in Italy, it is necessary to revise the view suggested by many of the early poems, namely that he condemns popular cultural forms per se. It would be more accurate to see his criticisms of popular culture in terms of its relationship with political activity in post-war Germany and to look more closely at his comments on German cultural developments.

Some clues can be found, not in the written texts of the time, but in the images of a country reconstructing and redefining itself. In 1962, a collection of photographs by René Burri went on sale in bookshops in France and Switzerland which provided readers with a visual record of the rebuilding programmes and everyday life of their near neighbours in Germany. When this edition was republished in 1986 it was expanded to incorporate several contemporaneous texts by Enzensberger, including the poems 'bildzeitung' and 'landessprache' from his earliest collections.¹⁰ The photographs construct complex images of Germany at the time of the 'Wirtschaftswunder' and, later, of the physical division of Germany after the erection of the Berlin Wall and the fortified border. Several reveal the uneasy juxtaposition of military and popular culture; in one a gang of children stop street games to watch American tanks moving down Yorckstraße in west Berlin, uncertain whether to salute

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ René Burri, Die Deutschen. Photographien 1957-64. Mit zeitgenössischen Texten von Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Schirmer Verlag, Mosel/Munich, 1986 (2nd edition).

or hide. In another, a fashion shoot on the eastern side of the city, a group of models stands on the steps of the Soviet war memorial. Many photographs hint at the incongruity of everyday popular culture at a time when the ruins brought by the war are still clearly visible. Italian scooters, Levi's, Coca-Cola, Tanzcafés and student balls appear in some photos, an abandoned synagogue next to a petrol station and bullet holes in the façades of Berlin flats are the subject of others. In a postscript to the republished edition, Enzensberger identified the years between 1955 and 1966 as a specific era in modern German history - 'Vorher war "Nachkrieg", danach "Achtundsechzig"'.¹¹ The images are for him visual essays, documents of Germany's cultural history, which demand close and attentive reading:

Deshalb fordern seine Arbeiten eine Lektüre, die sich auf das Detail einläßt.
Diese Photographien wollen gelesen, sie wollen entziffert sein. Sie sind nicht
auf Anhieb entstanden, und sie geben ihre Bedeutung nicht auf Anhieb preis.
Ohne Geduld und ohne Distanz ist Geschichte nicht zu haben.¹²

This postscript is consistent with Enzensberger's own methodology in his essays which examine the 'Einzelheiten', the details, of contemporary culture, published in collected form in 1962.¹³ This collection is highly significant: it is rare for a literary intellectual to take such a sustained look at contemporary popular culture. The collection occupies a position as an important cultural document of the transition period between the economic rebuilding of the Federal Republic and the political contestations of the student movement. The essays aim at a critical exploration of many of the cultural and literary practices of the era and raise a number of questions concerning the growth and nature of popular cultural forms and the possibility of oppositional practices. Many of the concerns exhibited in his earlier poetry

¹¹ Enzensberger, 'Postskripten - eine Bildlegende', in Burri, Die Deutschen, p. 205.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Enzensberger, Einzelheiten, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1962.

collections are given more detailed and systematic consideration in these essays.

The sites for debates of this sort were rarely available inside academic institutions in the Federal Republic.¹⁴ On the occasions that these themes were broached, exchanges were more likely to take place in podium discussions, through the radio essay network or through the feuilleton pages of newspapers such as Die Zeit. What these arguments might gain in terms of accessibility and spontaneity in these formats, they might equally forego in terms of academic rigour and consistency. Certainly, the years of the 'Wirtschaftswunder' witnessed a boom in magazines and journals dedicated to the critical analysis of modern culture. However, they were often reluctant to extend their enquiries beyond the realm of high culture, particularly literature, and consequently there was still a failure to examine the enormous cultural changes taking place in everyday life. Enzensberger, evaluating the collected edition of Andersch's journal, Texte und Zeichen, drew attention to this absence:

Wesentlicher ist aber, daß der Alltag der Bundesrepublik in diesen zweitausend Seiten so gut wie gar nicht reflektiert wird, und daß massiv gesellschaftliche Erfahrungen überhaupt nicht ins Blickfeld geraten. Man spricht von Mallarmé, aber nicht vom Rock-n-Roll; man analysiert die Plastiken von Giacometti, aber nicht das Werbefernsehen; man untersucht das absurde Theater, aber nicht die aberwitzige Motorisierung der Gesellschaft.¹⁵

In the light of the general absence of serious debate on aspects of contemporary culture, it is important to note how pioneering Enzensberger's contributions are to the framing of cultural questions on everyday life, particularly concerning the media and cultural politics. Angela McRobbie identified in his work what she terms 'a kind of

¹⁴ See Introduction, pp. 12-14.

¹⁵ Enzensberger, Texte und Zeichen. Aus der Finsternis des "Wirtschaftswunders", Alfred Andersch Nachlaß, Deutsches-Literaturarchiv, Marbach am Neckar.

intellectual loneliness'.¹⁶ She attributed this not least to the fact that his essays existed in a position outside the university and college system in Germany, when at the same time they had been used in Britain as founding texts for departments of media and cultural studies.

Aware of the importance of taking these questions inside the academy and of the necessity of subjecting the practices of popular culture to the kind of intellectual rigour reserved for other subjects, Enzensberger drew attention as early as 1959 to the lack of an established university discipline of 'Massenkommunikation'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, much of his criticism at this time shares the early British culturalist methodologies: a range of cultural products, and in the case of his critique of tourism, a cultural practice, are analysed textually using skills acquired in literary criticism to give insights into an expanded notion of cultural activity. Einzelheiten collects in one volume some twenty-five essays, many of which had been broadcast or published in magazines. It grants the reader not only an overview of post-war German culture, but also an idea of the internal division of interests within German cultural discourse at the time of publication. This is reflected in its four sections, on the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', on literary politics, on contemporary German writers, and finally a section on the relationship of poetry and politics. Enzensberger's methodology, consistent with his approach to the photographs of René Burri, is to draw attention to the details of particular cultural practices in order to learn something about the general status of contemporary culture:

Über das Schöne und das Wahre, über den Humanismus oder über das Menschenbild unserer Zeit, kurz über große Zusammenhänge und Hintergründe sind wir allzu oft und allzu eilig unterrichtet worden. Weniger harmlos scheint mir, was im Vordergrund steht: vielleicht wird es deshalb ungern wahrgenommen. Weil es allzu lokalisierbar ist, gilt der Fingerzeig aufs

¹⁶ Angela McRobbie, 'Age of triumphant mediocrity', The Guardian, April 9 1992, p. 28.

¹⁷ Enzensberger, 'Bildung als Konsumgut', Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie, p. 158.

Lokale als unanständig. Nur an ihm jedoch lassen sich Methoden der Beobachtung ausbilden, die aufs Ganze gehen, aufs Ganze übertragbar sind.¹⁸

The introductory essay in the collection, the key to understanding Enzensberger's other cultural criticism in this book and in his earlier volumes of poetry, sets out his argument that the discrete cultural practices explored here are indeed part of a whole network of social forces, which he identifies as the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. This essay is perhaps the most explicit and complete attempt by Enzensberger to provide an analysis of popular culture in modern societies and of the position of the critical intellectual in forms of oppositional intervention.

In this essay, Enzensberger engages directly with Adorno's depiction of the 'Kulturindustrie', although there is no mention of his mentor by name. The choice of title is crucial to understanding Enzensberger's revision of Adorno, as Enzensberger criticises the terminology used in the kind of critical thinking represented by Adorno and Horkheimer. The concept of the 'Kulturindustrie' is rejected in favour of the term 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', with the intention of highlighting how the industrial production of cultural objects should be seen as part of a far wider system of domination which extends to the manipulation of the thinking subject. This is a strategic misreading on Enzensberger's part. The Dialektik der Aufklärung makes clear that the 'Kulturindustrie' is only one example of the totality of Enlightenment rationality, the effects of which reach even to the processes of self-consciousness. Enzensberger's goal here is to question the privileged field of aesthetics implied by subsuming critical thinking under the term 'Kulturindustrie' because it obscures the specific social and political consequences of standardised or centralised production techniques:

Er verharmlost die Erscheinung und verdunkelt die gesellschaftlichen und

¹⁸ Enzensberger, 'Nachbemerkung', Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie, p. 207.

politischen Konsequenzen, die sich aus der industriellen Vermittlung und Veränderung von Bewußtsein ergeben.¹⁹

Enzensberger argues that the attention given to aesthetics in this conception of the legacy of Enlightenment is both an epistemological and a strategic mistake. By concentrating on the aesthetic aspects of this total social industrialisation, critics allow themselves to be manoeuvred into debates concerned only with aesthetic issues and are consequently marginalised in academic or cultural spaces remote from contestations of political power. His conception of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', which he defines as 'die eigentliche Schlüsselindustrie des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts'²⁰, is manifest in branches such as fashion, industrial design, organised religion and, most importantly, the system of state education, as well as the more familiar examples of the media, advertising and public relations. It also encompasses the induction of a "'wissenschaftliches" Bewußtsein' in society through the spread of disciplines such as psychoanalysis and sociology. The aim of this total system is clear and solely political: 'die existierenden Herrschaftsverhältnisse, gleich welcher Art sie sind, zu verewigen'.²¹

Enzensberger identifies the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' as 'ein Kind des letzten Jahrhunderts',²² which indicates that the key period of social change occurred after the industrial revolutions in various European countries, and consequently underplays the roots of the current cultural crisis, which Horkheimer and Adorno had located much earlier in the whole project of Enlightenment. Similarly, Enzensberger's account brackets from consideration the relationship between this technological project and those founding myths of western civilisation based on the transcendence of nature identified in Horkheimer and Adorno's study. Enzensberger focuses instead on how

¹⁹ Enzensberger, 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', *ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

on how modern political states utilise various forms of cultural and social practice to maintain political power. Whereas Adorno and Horkheimer isolated the drive towards instrumental rationality as the motor for social and political development, Enzensberger, despite noting the importance of technological development to the organisation and operation of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', sees no deeper forces at work here. For Enzensberger, the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' is part of the state's strategy in a struggle for power with its citizens; it operates first and foremost on the political stage, and is not part of a dialectical process founded on human desire for rationality and the banishment of myth.

Enzensberger identifies four crucial factors in its development as an industry. All four are located in the superstructure, in contrast to classical Marxist analysis, not in the base of the ownership of the means of production. The first necessary condition is for a certain philosophical stage to have been reached, namely that a state should define itself along Enlightenment lines and not as a theocracy. The second prerequisite is political, and depends upon the understanding that subjects are declared in possession of equal rights, although these rights may not be granted in practice. A state must also fulfil economic conditions: the basic level of subsistence for all members of society must have been reached and an economic surplus is therefore at the disposal of the state. The fourth and final condition concerns the development of technology, which must be sufficiently advanced to provide the physical means to influence and manipulate opinion, whether through radio, film or television.

It is the combination of these four elements which is necessary for a state to have the ability and the need (for the subjects are ostensibly free) to gain the assent of its population. Enzensberger identifies the interdependency of the political state and the consciousness industry as a phenomenon present in socialist and communist states and not simply one found only under capitalism. He insists on the primacy of the political implications of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', over and above any economic or cultural effects it might also produce. Its task is to secure a hegemonic relationship

²² Ibid., p. 8.

between the concentration of power in the state and the agreement of those ruled and is therefore a process which cannot be limited to economically liberal, democratic, capitalist states, a point which Enzensberger claims is overlooked by many critics on the left:

Jede Kritik der Bewußtseins-Industrie, die nur auf ihre kapitalistische Variante gemünzt ist, zielt zu kurz und verfehlt, was an ihr radikal neu und eigentümlich, was ihre eigentliche Leistung ist. Darüber entscheidet nicht oder nicht in erster Linie das gesellschaftliche System, das sich ihrer bedient; auch nicht, ob sie in staatlicher, öffentlicher oder privater Regie betrieben wird, sondern ihr gesellschaftlicher Auftrag.²³

This task, as has been noted, is essentially conservative, whatever the political ideology of the ruling parties in the state: it is to provide support for the existing structures of society in order to maintain the concentration of political power in the hands of those already in government. In this, Enzensberger agrees with Adorno's view that the 'Kulturindustrie' primarily operates to preserve the political status quo. As Enzensberger notes, it is no longer enough to have access to traditional means of securing power, such as the possession of industry, capital and armed forces. Political contestation takes place at the level of the cultural, at the level of thinking and what can actually be thought, and the importance of the consciousness industry is its role in securing assent to political decisions without the need to resort to physical coercion.

For Enzensberger, the real significance of the operations of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' lies not in the loss of some notion of aesthetic authenticity in the products of popular culture, but in the reduction of the possibilities for political decision making. Political alternatives are reduced through the exclusive access to, and use by those in power of, the different branches of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. Political

²³ Ibid., p.23.

alternatives are eliminated through a series of mechanisms ranging from censorship and economic pressure to the inculcation in ordinary people of a spurious condition of 'self-regulation' which silences criticism and prevents the suggestion of political alternatives. In much of this argument, Enzensberger's description of the operations of popular culture in contemporary society, particularly his move from an analysis of aesthetic forms to a wider consideration of the perceived loss of a public sphere for political decision-making, follows a path which is parallel to the mutations of Frankfurt School critical theory from Benjamin and Adorno's earliest essays to the concern for the decline of the public arena for politics in the works of Habermas.²⁴

Although Enzensberger's critique of the scale and function of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' might lead him to a general rejection of popular culture, he dismisses any idea of the possibility of a reversal in the industrialisation of society. He distances himself from critics who support a return to a pre-modern social order without the phenomena of the 'Massenmensch' and television by his insistence that they fail to see that history moves in such a way that it cannot be turned back. Opposition to the cultural practices of mass society must begin, according to Enzensberger, with a recognition that the consciousness industry is a historical fact and cannot be wished away.

Given his pervasive critique of the extent of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', this position might appear pessimistic and to reject any counterstrategy as impossibly utopian. Importantly though, Enzensberger uses this essay to suggest that opposition to the operations of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' is both possible and achievable. What is radical in Enzensberger's analysis, and what distances his critique from both conservative cultural criticism and from the conclusions of Horkheimer and Adorno, is his careful optimism towards the potential for political contestation from within the seemingly monolithic 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'.

Enzensberger argues that the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' cannot produce ideas and

²⁴ See Chapter Four, pp. 137-40.

opinions itself, merely reproduce them. Consciousness, according to Enzensberger, is produced through a dialogic process, through conversation and exchange of thoughts. The 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' can only attempt to absorb and control this kind of exchange on the microlevel and to reproduce it in its favour on a wider scale. He argues that the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' cannot function without access to the products, the ideas and creativity, of the specific class of the intellectuals. For Enzensberger, this means that the key site of political and cultural contestation comes in the relationship between the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' and this social formation. As even cultural criticism can be absorbed as a product of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', as Adorno had also noted in his discussion of 'Kritik als Ware'²⁵, this relationship is complex and fraught with danger. Nevertheless, Enzensberger finishes with a plea for intellectuals to enter into political contestation with the apparatus of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' at the sites of intellectual production, as he had done working for the Süddeutscher Rundfunk and would continue to do, particularly with the founding of the journal Kursbuch in 1965. As he noted, perhaps with an eye on his own career, the social role of intellectuals had changed with the rise of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', but there were still possibilities for contestation and change within its domain.

It is this guarded optimism which both drives much of Enzensberger's cultural-political project but which also leads him into several inconsistencies. There is no attempt to theorise how an intellectual can think outside the operations of such an all-pervasive 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' anyway and no consideration of how the struggle for meaning might also be conducted at the point of consumption or reception. This is clearly a complex and tense point for Enzensberger. In a number of case studies of the workings of popular cultural products, Enzensberger seems torn between a position close to Adorno's on the total manipulation of the consumer, and the recognition that in negotiations with popular culture by the ordinary citizens of the

²⁵ Adorno, Negative Dialektik, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1980, p. 16. See also Enzensberger's comments in 'Erster Zusatz: Über die Produktionsmittel der Kritik', in Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie, pp. 101-03.

Federal Republic, it is possible to recognise the signs of (utopian) desire for alternative social relations.

This essay, then, provides a clear definition by Enzensberger of the sociopolitical significance of cultural forms in contemporary society. It shows how, although he shares Adorno's criticism of the role and function of the media and related institutions in harnessing public opinion in favour of existing relations of power, he nevertheless accepts the existence of popular culture and is less pessimistic about the possibilities of successful political contestation, at least by intellectuals.

Enzensberger's six case studies in this section of Einzelheiten examine how the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' operates in specific historical instances. Importantly, the individual essays not only confirm the operations of a network of forces acting on individuals in contemporary society, but they also highlight gaps, elisions and spaces in what might otherwise be thought of as a totalising theory of popular culture, spaces from which the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' may be resisted.

Bearing in mind Enzensberger's use of montage and his incorporation of jargon and quotations as a form of 'Sprachkritik' in several early poems, it comes as no surprise that the first two essays are devoted primarily to linguistic analysis, an approach which also plays an important role in several other pieces. While these studies do not suggest that language is the only field within which cultural meaning is contested - his analysis of the cinematic 'Wochenschau' presents a convincing argument for the importance of visual and aural imagery in the creation of a specific viewing audience - it is clear that for Enzensberger there is a particularly strong relationship between the use of certain discourses and the maintenance of political structures. The significance of language to cultural and political contestations for Enzensberger at this time is striking, and is obviously borne out in his conviction of the centrality of literature to the formation and criticism of contemporary German culture. It is a measure of this conviction that he should focus first on the written texts of popular culture using the skills acquired in literary criticism to produce an extended analysis of the language

and political uses of cultural products outside the literary canon. This analysis can be seen in the two essays which provoked most reaction in the Federal Republic in the late 1950s and early 1960s and which helped to make Enzensberger's name as an important cultural critic.

In his critique of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published in 1962 under the title 'Journalismus als Eiertanz'²⁶, Enzensberger attacked both the editorial policy and the language employed by the newspaper. The establishment of a free and democratic press had been a cornerstone of the attempts by the western allies to institutionalise the cultural forms which would secure political democracy in the newly-founded Federal Republic. It was widely held by Allied policy-makers that the major newspapers provided a vital arena for public discussion, in addition to their role in reporting and commenting on domestic and foreign affairs.²⁷ Enzensberger's detailed comparison of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung with other leading newspapers from the United States and Europe, to the ranks of which the German publication had already declared itself, can be seen not just as an attack on an individual newspaper but as an implicit critique of the wider opportunities for public debate in the Federal Republic.

The relationship between the press and democratic politics is underlined at the beginning of Enzensberger's piece when he sets out to justify the significance of his critique. The history of the struggle for the freedom of the press in its assorted guises reflects, for Enzensberger, the political history of the struggle for the establishment of bourgeois democracy. Despite changes in the economic power of the bourgeoisie through the growth in industrial society, the critical public discourse guaranteed by properly functioning newspapers is, Enzensberger claims, still vital to democratic

²⁶ Enzensberger, 'Journalismus als Eiertanz: Beschreibung einer allgemeinen Zeitung für Deutschland', Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie, pp. 18-73.

²⁷ See Hermann Glaser, Die Kulturgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Band 1: 1945-48, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1990, pp. 183-91.

freedom:

Auch heute noch ist der Zustand, in dem sich ihre Presse befindet, ein zuverlässiges Indiz für das Maß an innerer Freiheit, das sich eine Gesellschaft bewahrt hat. Die großen Errungenschaften des bürgerlichen Jahrhunderts überleben, als unverrückbare Postulate, das Zeitalter ihrer ersten Verwirklichung. Sie werden zur Bedingung einer jeden künftigen Demokratie.²⁸

However, although other branches of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' are subject to some form of public accountability, Enzensberger argues, newspapers have actually ceased to offer within their pages the opportunity for a self-reflexive, critical debate concerning their language and influence. Enzensberger therefore justifies his own attempt at providing a critical analysis of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung by drawing attention to the influence which the newspaper itself claims to wield. Such influence must be subject to critical scrutiny as one of the prerequisites of democracy.

The method used by Enzensberger to explore the relationship between political events, newspaper coverage and the reading public concentrates not on the consumption of the newspaper but on its status as a text. Instead of a survey on the reception of its articles, whether ethnographic or quantitative, Enzensberger compares what several newspapers offer the reader in terms of political journalism over the course of ten consecutive days.²⁹ He concentrates on the division between what is reported as factual reporting and what is offered as the newspaper's own

²⁸ Enzensberger, 'Journalismus als Eiertanz', p. 20.

²⁹ The newspapers used for this comparative analysis included Die Welt, the Süddeutsche Zeitung, The Times, The Guardian, the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Le Monde, The New York Times (International Edition), the New York Herald Tribune (European edition), the Berlingske Tidende, Politiken, and Dagens Nyheter. The period of comparison was 7-16 December 1961. See Enzensberger, 'Journalismus als Eiertanz', p. 24.

commentary. The results of this comparative analysis lead Enzensberger to note discrepancies in the coverage of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung which point to the operations of an interest group, thus calling into question the newspaper's claims to independence. He considers the effect of this on the reader:

Wo dieses Defizit dagegen keine ungeordnete Menge ist, sondern ein Muster zeigt, wird man auf eine irreführende, unsachliche und tendenziöse Nachrichtenpolitik schließen dürfen. Im einzelnen sind an die Berichterstattung der Zeitung folgende Fragen zu richten: 1. Was erfährt der Leser überhaupt nicht? 2. Was erfährt er verstümmelt oder retouchiert? 3. Was muß er aus Andeutungen und Anspielungen erschließen?³⁰

For Enzensberger, the gaps and omissions in the columns of the newspaper, together with its failure to maintain what it, too, declares to be a crucial distinction between news and commentary, is attributable to its relationship with those in power in the Federal Republic. Instead of offering an arena where political events can be presented and discussed in accordance with the principles of publicity in democratic states, the newspaper fails to grant its readership a critical forum and is complicit with the policy of the government, thereby revealing itself to be a classic instance of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie':

In der Tat läßt sich die Sprache der Frankfurter Allgemeinen als eine Sprache der Herrschaft am besten begreifen. [...] Wer die Sprache der Herrschaft spricht, braucht um seine Unabhängigkeit nicht zu bangen; keine Macht wird ihn dessen berauben, was ohnehin ihr zugute kommt.³¹

The charges which Enzensberger levels at the newspaper concerning the ambiguous and partial information it provides, in addition to its implicit support for government

³⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

³¹ Ibid., p. 71.

policy whilst maintaining a claim to independence, show that, in his opinion, it fails to provide the critical public sphere which would enable its readership to participate in informed political decision-making. This must be seen as a criticism, not merely of one publication, but of the wider opportunities for political enlightenment through the popular cultural forms of the supposedly democratic Federal Republic at the time. As Enzensberger claims, the newspaper's deficiencies are symptomatic of its era:

Wer das politische, moralische und geistige Klima in der Bundesrepublik beobachten: wer Illusionen und Gelüste ihrer offiziellen Politik, sowie das Bild, das sie sich von der Welt zu machen liebt, bis ins kleinste ideologische Detail studieren will; wer an dieses Studium viel Geduld, kritische Vorsicht und erheblichen Scharfsinn zu verwenden geneigt ist, - für den wird die Frankfurter Allgemeine unentbehrlich sein und, wie zu besorgen ist, auch bleiben.³²

Enzensberger's polemic against the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung certainly stirred up critical debate as it provoked the editorial staff into a very public defence of the policy of their newspaper. Benno Reifenberg countered with an article, 'Hans Magnus, ein böswilliger Leser', published in the newspaper³³, which a year later even went to the trouble of producing a long pamphlet which aimed to correct Enzensberger's accusations point by point, albeit unconvincingly.³⁴ The controversy had become very much the kind of critical debate which Enzensberger had deemed necessary to the maintenance of democratic principles in the operations of the media, with several articles in periodicals on the contest, of which Enzensberger was

³² Ibid., p. 73.

³³ Benno Reifenberg, 'Hans Magnus, ein böswilliger Leser', Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 July 1962.

³⁴ Enzensberger'sche Einzelheiten korrigiert von der Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurt am Main, 30 June, 1963.

generally thought to have had the better.³⁵

In many ways, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung was an obvious target for a left-leaning critic. It did not claim to be an oppositional newspaper and had adopted a centrist and later a centre-right stance. That it should share the political outlook of the CDU-led government could have been no real surprise, although Enzensberger rightly stressed that he was only attacking its methods and not its political position. The second case study in Einzelheiten, a piece which had been broadcast in 1957, targeted a magazine whose relationship with the Allied licensing powers, and later with the government, was far more antagonistic, causing it to be banned or confiscated on at least eight occasions since its initial appearance in 1946.³⁶ In 'Die Sprache des Spiegel', Enzensberger attempted to analyse the nature of the social criticism carried in the magazine and to account for its influence on its readership, a group which Enzensberger defined as

die sogenannten meinungsbildenden Gruppen, also beispielsweise Lehrer, Journalisten, höhere Angestellte, Studentenvertreter, Politiker vom Stadtrat bis zum Minister. Durch diese Struktur seiner Leserschaft potenziert sich die Wirkung des Spiegel.³⁷

Although the magazine was independent of the government, industry and unions, and attracted an influential readership, Enzensberger expressed scepticism about its effectiveness in the enlightenment of its readers and about its capacity to contribute to a democratic public sphere. His criticism rests largely on the techniques used by the magazine, which encouraged the publication of news items in the form of stories and

³⁵ See Klaus Wagenbach, 'FAZ kontra Enzensberger', Neue Rundschau, 1963, 4, pp. 682-87.

³⁶ See Glaser, Die Kulturgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Band II, 1949-1967, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1990, p. 211.

³⁷ Enzensberger, 'Die Sprache des Spiegel', Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie, p. 76.

which promoted a personalisation of current affairs. After a detailed analysis of one of the stories, Enzensberger made the following four conclusions about the nature and working of the journal:

1. Die Sprache des Spiegel verdunkelt, wovon sie spricht.
2. 'Das deutsche Nachrichtenmagazin' ist kein Nachrichtenmagazin.
3. Der Spiegel übt nicht Kritik, sondern deren Surrogat.
4. Der Leser des Spiegel wird nicht orientiert, sondern desorientiert.³⁸

In view of Enzensberger's 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' thesis and of the relationship between the products of popular culture and the possibility of critical opposition, it is interesting to look closely at his analysis of the operations of Der Spiegel in the actual formation of a specific readership. Enzensberger traces the development by the magazine of an anonymous, universal form of language which is used in each article. Moreover, he identifies its technique of producing news in the form of a personal narrative, which reduces the opportunities for the reader to participate in a critical construction of recent events. Through techniques like these, the magazine succeeds in producing a new reader, instead of enlightening an existing readership:

Selbstverständlich gibt es 'den' Spiegel-Leser erst, seit es den Spiegel gibt: die Zeitschrift produziert ihn als ihre eigene Existenzgrundlage. Nicht nur macht sie ihre Gegenstände diesem Leser kommensurabel, sondern auch den Leser dem Magazin. Sie zieht ihn auf ihre Ebene, sie bildet ihn aus. Das ist kein einfacher Vorgang, sondern ein komplizierter Prozeß der Domestizierung, der sich an den Leserbriefen im Detail studieren läßt, die das Magazin jede Woche auf vielen Spalten abdruckt. Sie beweisen, daß der Dressur-Akt, jedenfalls bei einem Teil der Leserschaft, durchaus gelungen ist.³⁹

³⁸ Ibid., p. 100.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 82.

For Enzensberger, the practices of the magazine in the interpellation of a readership in this way do not secure the possibilities for public critical discourse. Instead, and of critical importance here, the language of Der Spiegel exploits a real need, 'das tiefe Bedürfnis, mitreden zu können'⁴⁰ but fails to allow the readership an appropriate voice. The magazine is also charged with encouraging passive consumers instead of aiding the orientation of the reader as an active participant in public events. This occurs through the repeated emphasis on the personal lives of prominent figures featured in news stories and through a reliance on a series of promised revelations:

Nicht die Rolle eines Handelnden, sondern die eines Zuschauers wird ihm dabei zugespielt. Die Einblicke und Enthüllungen, die ihm das Magazin verschafft, machen ihm zum Voyeur: er darf, ohne daß er für irgendetwas verantwortlich wäre, 'hinter die Kulissen' sehen. [...] Was dem Leser derart angeboten wird, ist die Position am Schlüsselloch.⁴¹

Significantly, Enzensberger attacks the form of Der Spiegel, not its explicit political stance. In spite of his reservations about the methods of the magazine, Enzensberger is adamant that it is the only magazine in the Federal Republic which is not afraid to break the consensus of support for those in power, and until something better appears, it is indispensable. Once more, he uses this essay to stress the links between an independent and critical press and the political awareness of citizens, which is necessary to the functioning of a democratic state. His conclusions could only have been reinforced by events in the latter half of 1962. An attempt to prosecute the magazine's editors for high treason after the publication of a sensitive military-political analysis led to a crisis in government, a series of actions which brought the debate about democracy and the freedom of the press to the notice of the whole country.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 93.

⁴² Glaser, Die Kulturgeschichte der Bundesrepublik, Band II: 1949-1967, p. 212.

The importance of the processes of the reception and consumption of popular cultural objects, especially concerning the spaces opened up within these processes for political contestation of the status quo, is shown in other case studies in this section of Einzelheiten. In a piece which is highly critical of cinematic newsreels for their attempted subject-formation, Enzensberger continues the analytical approach he had used in his essays on the press, this time replacing his linguistic analysis with an equally effective examination of the role of visual and aural imagery. In his analysis, Enzensberger echoes many points made by the Weimar cultural critic, Siegfried Kracauer, some thirty years previously.⁴³ Kracauer had argued that, although the weekly newsreels utilised extensive documentary material in order to construct a comprehensive representation of contemporary events, the finished films presented an illusory world which deliberately masked the economic inequalities and harsh social realities faced by their audiences:

Aber die Welt in diesen Wochenschauberichten ist gar nicht die Welt selber, sondern das, was von ihr übrigbleibt, wenn alle wichtigen Ereignisse aus ihr entfernt werden. [...] Denn veranschaulichte man die Dinge, wie sie heute sind und zu geschehen pflegen, so könnten die Kinobesucher beunruhigt werden und an der Güte unserer derzeitigen Gesellschaftsordnung zu zweifeln beginnen.⁴⁴

⁴³ See Siegfried Kracauer, Kino. Essays, Studien, Glossen zum Film, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1974, pp. 11-15, and Theorie des Films. Die Errettung der äußeren Wirklichkeit, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1985, pp. 259-61. There is no mention of Kracauer in the lengthy name index included in Einzelheiten.

⁴⁴ Kracauer, Kino. Essays, Studien, Glossen zum Film, pp. 11-12. For a fuller discussion of Kracauer's work on film, see Heide Schlüpmann, Ein Detektiv des Kinos. Studien zu Siegfried Kracauers Filmtheorie, Stroemfeld/Nexus, Basle/Frankfurt am Main, 1998, and Sabine Hake, The Cinema's Third Machine. Writing on Film in Germany 1907-33, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln/London, 1993, pp. 247-70.

Kracauer analysed several constituent elements in the generic repertoire of the film newsreel, which were utilised to construct this illusory world. These included sequences showing natural disasters⁴⁵, scenes showing children and animals⁴⁶, and representations of sporting events.⁴⁷ According to Kracauer, these stock elements encouraged political resignation rather than the political enlightenment of the audience.

Enzensberger's methodology and conclusions are remarkably similar, and point to an unacknowledged debt to Kracauer's essay. For Enzensberger, the stories told in the newsreels always conform to one of six basic narrative types, each of which conditions the viewer in a specific way. The stories range from those which focus on animals or celebrities and which act as distractions, or which again make the viewer into, quite literally, the voyeur of history and politics, to those which continually promote the wonders of technological progress and the spurious pleasure of identification with crowds at mass events. Enzensberger is most critical about the news items which focus on catastrophes and which attempt to explain political and historical events as the workings of natural law, thereby reinforcing a sense of helplessness and passivity in the audience. As Enzensberger shows, the newsreels produce their effects not just through the language they use, but through a combination of selected images, camerawork, dramatic music and careful selection of

⁴⁵ 'Durch die Bilder der aufgewühlten Natur, in die sie sich immer von neuem zurückziehen, wird zugleich im Zuschauer die Vorstellung erweckt, daß auch das gesellschaftliche Geschehen so unabwendbar wie irgendein Hochwasserunglück sei.' Kracauer, *Kino. Essays, Studien, Glossen zum Film*, p. 12.

⁴⁶ 'Der Ansturm der Babys entspricht der Neigung breiter Schichten der Bevölkerung, sich der Reife zu entäußern, die sie zu einer bewußten Durchdringung der sozialen Verhältnisse verpflichtete.' Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁷ 'Wie ihre allzu häufige Wiederkehr dem Sport eine Bedeutung verleiht, die ihm im Vergleich mit der sozialen und politischen Betätigung nicht zukommt, so verhindert sie den Aufweis vieler Ereignisse, die im entscheidenden Sinne aktueller sind als die sportlichen.' Ibid., p. 14.

the length of each item. This skilful employment of a number of different technologies results in the conditioning, not in the education, of the viewer.

Although the reels claim to offer an account of current events and news, Enzensberger insists that in terms of the information offered and the topicality of their reports, they are worthless:

Mit einem Wort, die Wochenschau, die man uns anbietet, ist publizistisch ohne Wert. Sie ist ein Instrument zur Lähmung, nicht zur Entfaltung des Bewußtseins. Gleichwohl entwirft sie ein ganz bestimmtes, genau definierbares Weltbild und hämmert es ihren zahllosen Besuchern ein, ohne ihnen die geringste Möglichkeit zur Kritik zu geben. Dieses Weltbild ist trostlos und niederträchtig. Das wäre an sich noch kein Einwand. Es ist aber darüber hinaus ganz und gar verlogen.⁴⁸

Enzensberger notes that the stories offered in the newsreels construct a deterministic history of society, a narrative of inevitable progression. This kind of fatalism mirrors, according to Enzensberger, a central thread in contemporary cultural criticism which pessimistically perceives an inevitable progression from the rise of the 'Massenmensch' to the apocalyptic ending of western civilisation in nuclear war. Despite his firm misgivings about the contents of the newsreels, Enzensberger distances himself from this kind of philosophical pessimism. For him, neither the audience nor the technology of popular cultural forms is really to blame for political passivity. Once more, he proposes that popular cultural forms can be used to provide a critical, democratic, enlightened forum. The failure of the newsreels in this process must be traced back to the economic interests of those companies which control their content and which are happy to discourage the active participation of the audience in the political questions of the day:

⁴⁸ Enzensberger, 'Scherbenwelt. Die Anatomie einer Wochenschau', Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie, p. 123.

Zur Erklärung des Übelstandes ist keine geschichtsphilosophische Theorie erforderlich; zuständig ist vielmehr die Volkswirtschaft. Sie lehrt, daß es eine wahrhaft unabhängige, intelligente Wochenschau nicht gibt, nicht geben kann, solange die bestehenden Marktverhältnisse unverändert bleiben. Ästhetische, moralische und politische Einwände nützen wenig, sofern sie diese Tatsache nicht berücksichtigen.⁴⁹

This is clearly a more optimistic position on the possibility of intervention in the production of popular culture than that occupied by Adorno. Like Kracauer, who argued that a formal restructuring of the newsreel would allow it to be used effectively as a medium for radical politics, Enzensberger sees no reason why the newsreel should not contribute to public education and debate.⁵⁰ There is certainly no outright condemnation of either the medium or its audiences, whose desire for information and education is noted without scorn. There is instead recognition that a popular cultural product of this sort is always at the same time a political phenomenon, even in democratic countries. The product allows governments and other interest groups to influence public opinion and public action, however carefully this is disguised in the content. In his calls for changes in the economic conditions governing the production of the newsreels, Enzensberger shows that popular cultural practices are not necessarily monolithic and manipulative, and that the medium allows representations of current events to be distributed which aid democratic, critical debate. At this point, Enzensberger does not explicitly raise the question of the negotiation of meaning by audiences, particularly the issue of whether audiences

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

⁵⁰ Kracauer argues that the newsreel 'sagt nicht mehr über die Zusammenhänge aus, die uns betreffen, wenn man zu ihren Luftschiffen und Volksfesten noch eine Arbeiterdemonstration hinzuaddiert; sie füllte sich nur dann mit Inhalt, wenn man ihre Konstruktion entscheidend veränderte. Wichtiger beinahe als die Aufnahme belangvoller Vorgänge ist der Wandel ihres Arrangements.' Kracauer, Kino. Essays, Studien, Glossen zum Film, p. 15. He adds no further information on the kind of formal reconstruction of the newsreel that he has in mind.

might be able to read against the grain representations which seek to maintain a dominant ideology.

In other essays in Einzelheiten, however, Enzensberger attempts to see cultural consumption not merely through the prism of manipulation and ideology, but through a consideration of the role of the desires and needs of the ordinary consumer. The remaining essays in the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' section of Einzelheiten focus not on the media, but on related popular cultural practices such as tourism or mail-order shopping. In these essays, Enzensberger considers the links between democratic processes, public needs and consumption in a series of analyses which reveals glimpses of a more populist, historically concrete reworking of the project of Frankfurt School cultural sociology.⁵¹

For Enzensberger, the best-selling catalogue of the mail-order company, N[eckermann] is an important and accurate ethnological document, a 'plebiscite' which corresponds to the exact wishes of German consumers. Although he seems to condemn outright the practices of mass consumption, claiming that

[d]as deutsche Proletariat und das deutsche Kleinbürgertum lebt heute, 1960,
in einem Zustand, der der Idiotie näher ist denn je zuvor,⁵²

his essay highlights the importance of taking the 'plebiscite' of the consumers seriously. He argues that the act of consumption bears a symbolic importance which carries various levels of meaning. Enzensberger sees that the catalogue documents the wishes and desires of ordinary people to make something of their lives, to aspire

⁵¹ Enzensberger's attention to the desires and needs of consumers has parallels, again, with several essays by Kracauer. See Sabine Hake, The Cinema's Third Machine, pp. 258-70 and Patrice Petro, Joyless Streets. Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989, pp. 63-68.

⁵² Ibid., p. 171.

to something better than the everyday reality that confronts them. The catalogue's readership

lebt, wie wir alle, in einem Horizont von Waren. Sie möchte, wie wir alle, 'etwas vom Leben haben', und dieses Etwas verdinglicht sich im Konsumgut. Die Umzingelung durch derartige versteinerte Wünsche ist so dicht, daß sie das alltägliche Leben dessen, der von ihnen eingeschlossen ist, geradezu definiert, mit der Einschränkung freilich, daß nur die Innenseite dieses Lebens sichtbar wird: es ist ein Leben, das seinen öffentlichen, seinen gesellschaftlichen Aspekt beharrlich verleugnet.⁵³

In the world of mass consumption that surrounds us all, even the intellectuals, according to Enzensberger, aspirational or even utopian desires are reified into a desire for consumer goods. The Marxist language of reification used here should not blind us to the fact that Enzensberger is inching towards a position beyond traditional left theories of manipulation and false needs and towards an understanding of the role of utopian desire in popular cultural practices. Enzensberger does not follow up this analysis to explore the crucial role of consumption in the political history of the Federal Republic.⁵⁴ Instead of attempting to explain the historical reasons why the

⁵³ Enzensberger, 'Das Plebiszit der Verbraucher', Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie, pp. 167-68.

⁵⁴ See Erica Carter, How German is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1997, particularly pp. 45-75. Carter affirms Enzensberger's identification of utopian longings in the acts of spectacular consumption during the early years of the Federal Republic. She argues: 'The utopian situation desired by many in postwar West Germany was the restoration of what was assumed to have been full collective identity: the construction of a West-Germanness, in other words, that was unproblematically available for popular identification. The eruption onto West Berlin streets of the multifarious modern forms of consumer spectacle - shop windows, neon lights, suburban shopping developments - arguably provided just such a focus of national popular affiliation, of attachment to a West Germany defined not by political values but by consumer prosperity'. Ibid., p. 143.

population of the Federal Republic succumbed to the dreams of consumption, he chooses to condemn the objects bought:

Die Mehrheit von uns hat sich für eine kleinbürgerliche Hölle entschieden, aus der es kein Entrinnen zu geben scheint. Diese Welt ist vollkommen geschlossen und gegen jede Störung abgedichtet.⁵⁵

Yet behind these condemnations lies the constant belief that the arena of popular culture is an important field of political contestation and that the supposed freedom of choice of the consumer is connected to the apparent political freedom offered in German democracy. This relationship is reflected in the language and concepts introduced by the writer, albeit with bitter irony, when he speaks of 'Bildung als Konsumgut' and of 'Das Plebiszit der Verbraucher'. In the 'kleinbürgerliche Hölle' created by the consumers, a world in which everything can end up as a consumer good in the Neckermann catalogue, he sees the material signs of a wider failure of society:

ein gesellschaftliches Versagen, an dem wir alle schuld sind: unsere Regierung, der die Verblödung einer Mehrheit gelegen zu kommen scheint; unsere Industrie, die ihr blühende Geschäfte verdankt; unsere Gewerkschaften, die nichts gegen eine geistige Ausbeutung unternehmen, von der das materielle Elend der Vergangenheit nichts ahnen konnte; und unsere Intelligenz, welche die Opfer dieser Ausbeutung längst abgeschrieben hat.⁵⁶

The sphere of private goods cannot be separated, for Enzensberger, from the formation of political culture in the Federal Republic. He attacks his critics, who fail to recognise

⁵⁵ Enzensberger, 'Das Plebiszit der Verbraucher', p. 168.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 171-72.

daß Dinge, über ihren Gebrauchszweck hinaus, etwas über das Bewußtsein dessen aussagen, der sie herstellt und gebraucht.⁵⁷

The meanings behind the desires of the public and revealed in their fulfilment in acts of consumption are firmly linked to the wider contestations which take place in other everyday practices. Enzensberger connects the apparent freedom to consume to the absence of genuine freedom afforded by contemporary social relations. The consuming subject can hardly be considered a free citizen:

Bei genauerer Betrachtung zeigt sich, daß das Reich der Freiheit arg zusammengeschrumpft ist: ungefähr auf den Flächeninhalt eines Selbstbedienungsladens. Gegängelt in der Schule, im Beruf, von Behörden und Polizisten? Bedauerlich. Aber ein Trost bleibt uns allen: beim Einkaufen sprengen wir unsre Fesseln. Unbeeinflusst von Reklame- und Marketing-Techniken, frei von jedem Druck, von jeder Überredung, kommen wir im Akt des Kaufens zu uns selbst.⁵⁸

The desire for freedom, which Enzensberger tends to define only by its absence, is also evident in the popular cultural practices of contemporary tourism. The growth in travel in the years of the 'Wirtschaftswunder' in the Federal Republic had been remarkable, and could be linked both to Germany's recent political history and to the urge to escape the destruction of the cities:

In der Trümmerzeit hatte die Fahrt ins Ausland zur größten Sehnsucht gehört. Nun konnte man sie sich leisten; ein neues Selbstwertgefühl stellte sich ein. Man kehrte als gut zahlender Gast in die Länder zurück, die ein paar Jahre zuvor von der deutschen Wehrmacht besetzt gewesen waren, was nicht nur

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.175.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 177-78.

Verklemmung beseitigte, sondern auch zu neuen Überheblichkeitsgefühlen führte.⁵⁹

Enzensberger discovered in the cultural practice of mass tourism the manifestation of a desire similar to the one he had located behind the acts of consumption in contemporary Germany. After tracing the social history of travel and the growth of tourism in the nineteenth century, he claimed that the desire to leave one's surroundings could be attributed to the seeds of a 'Freiheitbewußtsein' sown in the rise to power of the bourgeoisie. In an era of popular culture, the escape from the industrialisation of everyday life had itself become an industry, just as the flight from the world of commodities had itself been transformed into a commodity. In spite of this dialectic, for Enzensberger the contemporary phenomenon of mass tourism was important, not so much in terms of the destination of the tourists, but because of the manifestation of the desire to escape contemporary industrial life, a desire which had not received the political attention it deserved:

Es ist die Kraft einer blinden, unartikulierten Auflehnung, die in der Brandung ihrer eigenen Dialektik scheitert. Es stellt der politischen Verfassung, in der wir uns befinden, ein vernichtendes Zeugnis aus, daß allein Omnibusunternehmer und Bettenhändler diese Kraft ernst nehmen. Die Flut des Tourismus ist eine einzige Fluchtbewegung aus der Wirklichkeit, mit der unsere Gesellschaftsverfassung uns umstellt. Jede Flucht aber, wie töricht, wie ohnmächtig sie sein mag, kritisiert das, wovon sie sich abwendet.⁶⁰

In accordance with the conclusions of his analysis of mail-order consumption, Enzensberger claimed here to have located a political desire at work in a popular cultural practice, which ultimately could not satisfy it. The political desire here is for

⁵⁹ Glaser, Die Kulturgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Band II: 1949-1967, p. 149.

⁶⁰ Enzensberger, 'Eine Theorie des Tourismus', Einzelheiten I: Bewußtseins-Industrie, p. 204.

freedom, or more explicitly freedom from the industrialisation and commodification of everyday life, and the fulfilment of this desire is promised but never achieved in the kind of popular cultural practice examined by Enzensberger, whether in consumption or in tourism. However, again Enzensberger's analysis fails to go further to provide a definition of the freedom desired and revealed in popular cultural practices, or how forms of fulfilment are offered by these practices. This also leads to the failure of his critiques to provide examples of how these desires might be connected through popular cultural practices to their fulfilment in political action. Although these essays are radical in drawing attention to the links between popular cultural practices and political desires, it would not be until nearer the end of the 1960s that Enzensberger would provide more complete answers to these questions.

Enzensberger's analysis of popular cultural forms has important implications for his conception of the role of literature. With the rise of popular cultural forms, the nature of the production and reception of literature changes in significance. Literature ceases to be the sole or even the dominant cultural medium, and its relationship with other, newer cultural forms must be examined. In the light of Enzensberger's conception of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', to which he grants such a powerful status, the relationship between literary texts and the formation of political consciousness assumes an immediate relevance. It is necessary to question, for example, whether Enzensberger views literature as simply another cultural form which has been absorbed by the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' to shape consent to the existing forms of government, or whether there is something which literature possesses in itself which allows it by its very nature to remain outside those areas of political affirmation to which other cultural practices are subject. If literature, too, offers a cultural space within which political contestations can take place, then it is important to trace how Enzensberger sets out in his writing to secure the possibility of a democratic forum within the Federal Republic. Several essays in Einzelheiten touch on these questions. By juxtaposing Enzensberger's views on reading as a popular cultural practice, which are evident in his piece on 'Bildung als Konsumgut', with his comments on poetry and politics scattered in a number of literary critical

essays, it is possible to discern the tensions and inconsistencies which govern Enzensberger's whole conception of the role of literature as a cultural form in the Federal Republic.

The sociology of contemporary reading practices is given much attention in Enzensberger's analysis of the mass production of paperback books which appears alongside his other essays on popular culture. For Enzensberger, Ernst Rowohlt's publishing enterprise played a significant role in the cultural reconstruction of the Federal Republic under the guidance of the Allies and belongs to attempts to provide cultural forms which would help to secure political enlightenment and democracy. The production of the first Rowohlt-Rotations-Romane in December 1946, using unbound newspaper and rotation printers, aimed to introduce modern foreign works into Germany at an accessible price. It was also intended to change German reading practices, as Rowohlt was quick to point out:

Dieser Plan bricht mit einer Tradition: der Neigung des Deutschen zur 'Mummifizierung' von Bibliotheken.⁶¹

The mass production of cheap books, made possible by Rowohlt, raises the question, for Enzensberger, of whether books can be seen as consumer goods and whether literature should then be seen as another branch of the 'Kulturindustrie'. In his view, the history of publishing reveals that the book has always been a commodity and that the practices of distributing and selling books on a large scale means that the phenomenon of popular culture has been present, in its contemporary form at least, for more than a century:

Seit der Erfindung des Buchdrucks war das literarische Erzeugnis immer schon Ware, aber erst hier, im Marktartikel, kommt dieser Warencharakter zu

⁶¹ Quoted in Glaser, Die Kulturgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Band I: 1945-1948, p. 135.

sich selbst.⁶²

As a result of the technical conditions of production, which demand that for financial reasons the presses should not be turned off and should operate at full capacity, book production functions in accordance with the other rationalised branches of the 'Kulturindustrie':

Es macht die literarische Produktion endgültig zu einem Appendix seiner finanziellen und technischen Apparatur.⁶³

The fact that literary production must be seen as another example of the commodification of cultural practices has consequences for the activity of literary criticism, which had assumed as its mission the propagation of a form of enlightened humanism dependent on textual criteria and autonomous of industrial processes. Enzensberger considers that the traditional role of literary criticism is called into question as a result of these processes:

Diese selten ausgesprochenen, als stillschweigende Voraussetzungen jedoch von den meisten seriösen Kunstrichtern anerkannten Postulate besagen, daß Kritik zur Hüterin des reinen Geistes berufen sei; daß sie es mit Texten, nicht mit Waren zu tun habe; daß sie etwa auf ein Gespräch des Kritikers mit dem Autor hinauslaufe, bei den allenfalls eine qualifizierte Zuhörerschaft zugelassen sei; [...] Eine solche Auffassung der Kritik von ihr selbst ist theoretisch durchaus haltbar, und sie kann unter gewissen gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen äußerst wirksam sein. Diese Bedingungen lassen sich jedoch namhaft machen. Eine literarische Öffentlichkeit, die eine intakte Klassengesellschaft mit eindeutigem geistigem und materiellem Gefälle, in

⁶² Enzensberger, 'Bildung als Konsumgut. Analyse der Taschenbuch-Produktion', Einzelheiten I. Bewußtseins-Industrie, p. 137.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 143

welcher Literatur und Kritik sowohl den Rang wie die Interessen der privilegierten Klasse teilen: Bedingungen also, die nicht mehr gegeben sind.⁶⁴

Enzensberger insists that new methods of production, which highlight the commodification of the book, leave the question of the literary quality of the text undisturbed. What changes is the way that texts circulate and help to define and construct the intellectual level of contemporary society. This whole new sociology of reading must be taken into account in literary criticism, Enzensberger maintains, which ultimately has a responsibility to the public sphere and not simply to textual interpretation. The new challenges facing criticism demand, therefore, recognition of the technological conditions of the production of books.

The commodification of literature in this way means that the practices of reading, in particular the formation of the political consciousness of the reader, must be examined and compared to the processes of audience formation which Enzensberger had explored in his essays on journalism, newsreels and mail-order catalogues. The importance of public access to reading material of different kinds in the history of social democracy in Germany is emphasised by Enzensberger, but in his view these historical conditions have been altered through the rise of other cultural forms. Although workers had once, however naively, held the opinion that 'Wissen ist Macht', newer media appear to have dulled this intellectual curiosity:

[...] ihr einstiger Lesehunger ist verflogen; Film, Funk, Fernsehen und illustrierte Presse haben ihre geistige Potenz eingedämmt und kanalisiert. [...] Das Proletariat hat materielle Freiheiten gewonnen und dafür seine geistigen kampflos preisgegeben.⁶⁵

For Enzensberger, the industrial techniques employed in the production and

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 136-37.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

distribution of literature could still be effective in the political enlightenment of the public, if only the publishing houses would distribute material which addressed contemporary problems. Like the other popular cultural practices of journalism and the cinema, there is little wrong with the medium itself, but much to be disputed in the contents of what the audience receives:

Das Taschenbuch hat ein Publikum, das in die Hunderttausende geht. Worauf warten die Verleger? Warum exponieren sie sich nicht? Bereitwillig liefert der Apparat Zuckerbrot und Zirkusspiele. Kultur läßt er sich ablisten. Tabu bleibt, was im politischen Alltag nützen könnte.⁶⁶

The technological apparatus of the mass production of books does, however, shape the content of what is written. Enzensberger quotes Brecht and Suhrkamp's remarks, originally made on the character of opera production, about the relationship between producer and apparatus to show that the writer is controlled by the conditions of production and not the other way round.⁶⁷ Enzensberger argues that the technology of production, whereby economies of scale demand that the presses must always be active, has an effect on both the form and content of what is written. He rejects Brecht's assertion that a change in the ownership of the apparatus would immediately solve this particular technological problem. Enzensberger argues that Brecht's division in cultural production between technology and writer is also too schematic as it ignores the commissioning role of an intermediary level of cultural managers.

From this essay, it is clear that Enzensberger sees book production as part of the

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 160.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 144. Enzensberger quotes here from Bertolt Brecht and Peter Suhrkamp, 'Anmerkungen zur Oper Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny', in Bertolt Brecht, Stücke. Band III, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1955, pp. 260ff. See also Chapter One, pp.43-44, where Enzensberger draws on the same argument in his analysis of film production in Germany.

'Kulturindustrie', and therefore closely related, in terms of its industrial form, to the other popular cultural practices he had examined. The crucial questions concerning the extent and circumstances under which a literary text, even a poem, belongs to the political operations of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' remain, however, not just unanswered, but hardly raised. This silence suggests that although the industrialisation of cultural practices has also greatly affected the practice of literature, this has only been at the level of production and not in the role or content of a poem, which maintains a freedom and autonomy denied to most other cultural products.

This surmise is reinforced by Enzensberger's essay on the 'Weltsprache der modernen Poesie', originally used as the introduction to his anthology, Museum der modernen Poesie, in 1960, and rewritten for inclusion in Einzelheiten.⁶⁸ After asserting that poetic language is closely tied to the general cultural and social development of a country, Enzensberger focuses on the nature of poetry in advanced industrial societies. In a section with the title, 'Technologie, Antiware', which suggests how the idea of commodification is bound up with that of technological modernity, he highlights the tradition in modern poetics, stretching from Poe to Mayakovsky and beyond, which defines poetic creativity using technological metaphors. Although poets were eager to adopt technological descriptions of the processes of writing and the air of modernity which went with them, other elements of contemporary society were just as eagerly rejected, not least the commodification of culture. In Enzensberger's analysis, poetry kept step with technological modernity while continually attempting to reject this process of commodification:

Zwar hält sie mit der vorherrschenden Produktionsweise Schritt, so aber, wie man mit einem Feind Schritt hält. Daß das Gedicht keine Ware ist, dieser Satz ist keineswegs eine idealistische Phrase. Von Anfang an war die moderne

⁶⁸ Enzensberger, 'Weltsprache der modernen Poesie', Einzelheiten II: Poesie und Politik, pp. 7-28.

Poesie darauf aus, es dem Gesetz des Marktes zu entziehen. Das Gedicht ist die Antiware schlechthin.⁶⁹

Enzensberger continues by making the claim that poetry in its very essence, which is left here undefined and beyond analysis, is a negation of social conditions:

Ebenso ist der freischwebendste Text von Arp oder Eluard bereits dadurch poésie engagée, daß er überhaupt Poesie ist: Widerspruch, nicht Zustimmung zum Bestehenden.⁷⁰

When Enzensberger's comments on book production and the modern poem are set side by side, the tensions become apparent. In his analysis, the book has always been a cultural commodity, since the development of printing and even more so in an era of advanced technology and the mass production and distribution of cheap texts.

However, he also argues that the poem, by its very essence, is an anti-commodity, and a negation of the commodification of culture and of political conditions. In this way, the anti-commodity is circulated and read in conditions which owe everything to the technology of literary production. There are several difficulties here.

Enzensberger fails to define exactly how a poem, through some essential, mysterious quality, negates contemporary conditions. Is this quality inherent in all poems, at all times throughout history? Are all poems anti-commodities in the same way, or some through form and some through critical content? A further, related difficulty is the aporia which seems to be present in his thinking on the nature of the anti-commodity as a product which is distributed within a commodified cultural practice. How can the book be a commodity and its content, if it is a poem, an anti-commodity? How can the poem retain its negative, critical function as it circulates within a society which appears to become increasingly commodified as technology impacts on all cultural practices?

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

For Enzensberger, the distribution and consumption of poetry belongs to the industrialisation of culture. The structures of this industry are held responsible for the failure of poetry to engage a larger audience despite the increased accessibility of cultural products:

Zwar verfügen wir heute über die technischen Mittel, Kultur allgemein zugänglich zu machen. Die Industrie, die sie handhabt, reproduziert jedoch zugleich die gesellschaftlichen Widersprüche, die das verhindern; ja sie verschärft sie, indem sie der materiellen Ausbeutung die geistige verbindet.⁷¹

This process is not defined any further by Enzensberger, who claims that the methods of production force poetry into either compromising itself as a form or losing its audience:

Das Ergebnis ist auf der einen Seite eine immer höher gezüchtete Poetik für ein nach Null konvergierendes Publikum, auf der anderen Seite, präzise davon abgetrennt, die ständig primitiver werdende Massenversorgung mit Poesie-Ersatz, sei es in den kommerziellen Formen des Bestsellers, des Digest, des Films und des Fernsehens, sei es mit den staatlich geförderten Surrogaten der politischen Propaganda.⁷²

This statement suggests that the chances for poetry to escape the commodification and industrialisation of culture are bleak. However, Enzensberger insists that the historical consciousness contained in the poem will continue to be circulated, in spite of the tendencies of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'.

The essays collected in the volume Einzelheiten, show how, for Enzensberger,

⁷¹ Ibid.

cultural practices of different sorts are closely tied together. Although Enzensberger's theory of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' is pessimistic about the chances of fulfilling utopian desires within the existing practices of popular culture, he is adamant that the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' is not monolithic. Not only are the intellectuals granted a privileged position both inside the world of consumer goods and able to think beyond the processes of reification, but poetry also implicitly possesses something in itself which allows it by its very nature to remain outside the operations of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. Literature, according to Enzensberger, offers a cultural space within which political contestations can take place: poetry in its very essence is a negation of social conditions. Although his sociology of cultural forms and practices in the Federal Republic is radical and critical, particularly in its analysis of newer cultural products, there are many problems left unsolved when it turns its attention to the practice of poetry. These tensions can be seen at the fore in Enzensberger's work in the ensuing decade.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 24-25.

I

Enzensberger's concept of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' remains fundamental to his understanding of contemporary culture throughout the 1960s, and provides the theoretical context within which his varied political and cultural interventions in this turbulent period can be interpreted. The 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' thesis was formulated originally at a time when the Federal Republic was experiencing the benefits of the 'Wirtschaftswunder' under Ludwig Erhard, minister for economic affairs and later chancellor, at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. It articulated an understanding of the importance of contemporary cultural practices to the construction and stabilisation of political and cultural identities and in the communication and shaping of political forms and political ideologies to the population.¹ Enzensberger was deeply critical of the 'restoration' of conservative values which accompanied the economic boom in the Federal Republic, and proposed opposition to the hegemonic effects of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' in the German political settlement through the critical enlightenment of the public.

Although he dismissed theories of a total manipulation of the audience, he was pessimistic about the capacity of ordinary viewers and readers to negotiate or to oppose the ideological messages borne by the media. In a move which amounted to both self-legitimation and to a clarion call to fellow writers, he argued that the media, like any other industry, rely on selling a product. This product requires some form of content to be sold successfully and therefore draws on the intelligentsia to write or to produce

¹ Raymond Williams makes a similar argument about the general hegemonic power of the media in Television: Technology and Cultural Form, Fontana, London, 1974, particularly Chapter 1: The technology and the society, and Chapter 5: Effects of the technology and its uses.

programmes. In this way, the media are not monolithic but can be countered, albeit only by the efforts of a vanguard of 'enlightened' intellectuals who are able to turn the requirements of the media to their own advantage and hence to contribute items or even complete programmes which communicate oppositional messages.

This notion of media opposition is heavily dependent on a social formation which gained prominence in the early 1960s, when critical intellectuals enjoyed a particular prestige. Many members of the literary intelligentsia in the Federal Republic were not viewed simply as producers of novels, plays and poetry, but were distinguished as 'Intellektuellen' by virtue of their role as custodians of political democracy acting outside parliament.² In order to understand Enzensberger's attempts to outline a media strategy based on the critical interventions of a vanguard of left-leaning intellectuals, it is necessary to examine in more detail the dynamics and history of this grouping in the Federal Republic. The developments in Enzensberger's media theory in the 1960s are closely connected to the fluctuating fortunes of the efficacy of this social formation. As it entered a period of crisis amid increasing political discontent as the 1960s went on, so Enzensberger's early attempt to provide a critical media strategy based on the combined efforts of individual intellectuals began to seem inadequate and outdated. Ultimately, the widespread collapse of faith in the potential of the literary intellectuals to form an effective oppositional vanguard contributed to a crucial rethinking by Enzensberger of counterstrategies to the operations of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'.

II

Die Hoffnungen, mit denen ein großer Teil der westdeutschen Intelligenz den

² See Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, Protest and Democracy in West Germany, Macmillan, London, 1988, particularly Chapter 1: Critical Intellectuals as Extra-Parliamentary Custodians of Democracy, pp. 17-71. An earlier version of these arguments can be found in Wilfried van der Will, 'The German Literary Intelligentsia and the Anti-Authoritarian Movement', Contemporary German Studies, Occasional Papers No.2, Strathclyde, 1986, pp. 34-53.

Versuch der Alliierten begrüßt hat, in diesem Teil Deutschlands eine funktionsfähige parlamentarische Demokratie zu errichten, haben getrogen. Gutmütig, friedfertig und geduldig haben diese von rechts so genannten Linksintellektuellen versucht, die Verfassung beim Wort zu nehmen und die Gesellschaft der Bundesrepublik von ihren eigenen Prämissen her durch rationale Vorschläge und moralischen Zuspruch zu reformieren.³

Critical intellectuals as a group enjoyed a particular prominence in Germany in the post-war period. In attempts to found an effective democracy on German soil, both post-war German states gave a substantial critical function to intellectuals. This was not simply because of a desire to compensate those intellectuals persecuted under the Third Reich in the new political settlement. As the allied powers in the Federal Republic restructured and decentralised the media after National Socialist control, the constitutional encouragement of diverse viewpoints and pluralism meant that many intellectuals were offered access to and participation in the work of the media to buttress the democratic nature of the new institutions.⁴ As the post-war settlement in Germany began to be driven less by the project of ensuring democracy and effecting a policy of denazification and more by the confrontation between the allied powers at the start of the 'Cold War', many of the younger generation of writers contributed to calls for a 'third way' for Germany which would be neither Stalinist nor capitalist. This group, which included figures such as Richter, Andersch, Koeppen and Böll, who would later be joined by younger authors such as Grass, Walser, Rühmkorf and Enzensberger, produced for its short existence the periodical, Der Ruf, and subsequently came to constitute the loose association of critical intellectuals who met as Gruppe 47.⁵

³ Enzensberger, 'Berliner Gemeinplätze', in Enzensberger, Palaver. Politische Überlegungen (1967-1973), Frankfurt am Main, 1974, p. 13. First published in Kursbuch 11, 1968, pp. 151-69.

⁴ See Burns and van der Will, Protest and Democracy in West Germany, p. 20 and Peter Humphreys, Media and Media Policy in Germany, Berg, Oxford, 1994, (2nd edition), p. 4.

⁵ Burns and van der Will, Protest and Democracy in West Germany, p. 20.

This group of writers were at the core of much of the critical literature of the 1950s and early 1960s and were the target of hostility from the CDU government under Adenauer and Erhard and the right-wing sections of the press. When Gruppe 47 was formed, those involved saw themselves primarily as political journalists, rather than novelists and poets, whose ambitions in political publicity had been thwarted.⁶ The writers associated with Gruppe 47 came to prominence in the 1950s through the success of their literary publications and the public profile gained during debates on the nature of the Bundeswehr and campaigns against nuclear weapons. These activities ensured that the literary intelligentsia became a distinct social formation in the Federal Republic of the late 1950s and early 1960s and occupied an important political position as the 'conscience' of the new nation and guarantor of democratic debate. Importantly, any criticism of governmental policies or condemnation of societal developments tended to be couched in moral, rather than specifically ideological, terms. This tendency had its roots in the founding of Gruppe 47 and the mistrust at that time of totalising political ideologies, not only as a reaction against National Socialism but also compounded by the initial desire to be outside the two competing ideologies of American capitalism and Stalinism which dominated post-war Germany. As a consequence, the group neglected to develop any more fully theorised political positions informed by sociological or economic analysis, or by political science.⁷ In the years before the rise of the student movement and the associated shifts in the political formation,

it had become clear that there existed in the life of the Federal Republic a grouping largely, though not wholly, identical with Gruppe 47, whose representatives spoke collectively and sometimes individually on important matters related to defence, freedom of speech and the division of Germany,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 37. This lack of theoretical sophistication was later perceived by many commentators allied to the student movement to be an unforgivable weakness on the part of Gruppe 47.

appealing to the general public, to parliament and to the world. The failures of the past and the deficits of politics in the present had obviously created within the public discourse a space that no institution of formal democracy could occupy and that therefore would either remain unfulfilled altogether or be usurped spontaneously or informally by critical individuals or groups.⁸

The historical emergence of the literary intelligentsia into public prominence as critical intellectuals, whose presence and interventions in political debate acted to register dissent from government policy and so guarantee a democratic plurality of voices, provided Enzensberger with a useful model for theorising the media. His general notion of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' as authoritarian and conducting a hegemonic campaign for popular support fits neatly alongside the specific political culture of the time in the Federal Republic under the 'Kanzlerdemokratie', dominated by the CDU. His strategy for effective opposition to the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' is indebted to this political reality, founded as it is on the activities of a small group of critical intellectuals who act as an elite vanguard to a more general movement of dissent. In this way, Enzensberger's media strategy in the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' essay is a theoretical legitimisation of those practical alliances of intellectuals, such as Gruppe 47, which had already attained a measure of political effectiveness. As this political formation was challenged in the mid-1960s, its suitability as an agent of opposition in theorising the media became open to question. The privileged position of the critical intellectuals as custodians of democracy came under threat from several sides, including voices from within its own ranks, not least Enzensberger himself through his new critical journal, Kursbuch. As the usefulness of the critical intellectuals as a social formation became debated, there were attempts to offer more systematic ways of understanding and articulating the historically changing relationship of institutionalised communication to political democracy, particularly through Jürgen Habermas's recently published theory of 'Öffentlichkeit'.

⁸ Ibid., p. 34.

III

Enzensberger's analysis of the operations of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' and of the importance of the media as effective channels for political information and manipulation appeared to receive confirmation with a series of controversies over the press and broadcasting system in the Federal Republic in the early 1960s. The possibilities for investigative journalism appeared to be under threat in the 'Spiegel' affair' in 1962. This was seen as a major (and, as it later proved after lengthy judicial proceedings, successful) test of the principle of press freedom from state interference, which in this instance masqueraded under the pretext of state security.⁹ The public furore and opprobrium towards the government, and in particular towards the minister responsible, the right-wing Minister of Defence, Franz Josef Strauss, resulted eventually in the strengthening of press freedom through a legal amendment in 1968. However, growing press concentration was still perceived as a threat to the possibilities for political balance. The increasing domination and influence of the right-of-centre Springer-Verlag was attacked by several intellectuals, including Enzensberger, leading to boycotts of Die Welt. Proof of Springer's threatening influence came, for his opponents, in 1968 with the shooting by a dutiful citizen of SDS leader Rudi Dutschke, who had been the subject of a campaign of demonisation in Springer's newspapers. These events taken as a whole over a short historical period gave credence to those parts of Enzensberger's work which had connected broadcasting and the press to the functioning of democracy.

Although Enzensberger's essay on the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' had drawn attention to the close links between the practices and products of the media and the possibilities for political debate in the Federal Republic, it had only attempted to provide some insights into the perceived effects of the media on political activity. Its successful articulation of fears of widespread public manipulation for political ends could not disguise its limited

⁹ Humphreys, Media and Media Policy in Germany, pp. 72-73.

value in providing a coherent theory of the media in post-war industrial nations. A more systematic analysis of some of Enzensberger's insights into the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', incorporating a more fully researched historical perspective, was provided by Jürgen Habermas's theory of 'publicity' or the 'public sphere', published as Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit in 1962. Habermas's work offers not simply an analysis of the media but moves towards a theory of society of which the media are constituent parts, and as such has generally defined the popular culture debate within the younger generation of the Frankfurt School.¹⁰ Habermas's theory does not focus directly on the media, but offers instead an analysis of the history and sociology of institutions and practices which have sustained public communication from the Renaissance on. However, his critique of the status of communication in late capitalism, when public exchange takes place in and is shaped by the commercial media institutions, acknowledges and extends Enzensberger's analysis¹¹ and has proved productive for much subsequent work on the media.¹²

In contrast to the extensive attacks on popular culture by earlier Frankfurt School critics such as Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas argues that in early bourgeois culture the liberal press acted to guarantee the existence of a degree of 'Öffentlichkeit', usually translated in English as the 'public sphere'. This was a site which existed

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, Luchterhand, Darmstadt/Neuwied, 1969. On the significance of this work to Critical Theory in the Frankfurt School tradition, see Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'Critical Theory, Public Sphere and Culture. Jürgen Habermas and his Critics', New German Critique, 16, Winter 1979, pp. 89-118, and Oskar Negt, 'Media: Tools of Domination or Instruments of Liberation? Aspects of the Frankfurt School's Communication Analysis', in Kathleen Woodward (ed), The Myths of Information. Technology and Postindustrial Culture, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980, pp. 65-87.

¹¹ Habermas draws on Enzensberger's 'Bildung als Konsumgut' essay, p. 183, and lists Einzelheiten in the section of his bibliography '4. Unter dem Aspekt der Massenkommunikation', Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, p. 281.

¹² For an account of the importance of Habermas's theory to contemporary media studies, see John Durham Peters, 'Distrust of representation: Habermas on the public sphere', Media, Culture and Society, 15 (1993), pp. 541-71.

outside the state, the market and the private sphere organised around the family, and was governed by the public reason of private citizens. They were called upon to exercise reason without regard to their personal interests and could debate political events as reported by an objective press in order to reach a form of consensus or public opinion which could legitimise or dissent from parliamentary decisions. The notion of an objective press reporting in the public interest and not in the service of the state or private capital is obviously fundamental to Habermas's historical concept. However, Habermas argues that the early bourgeois press underwent a substantial transformation, particularly in the twentieth century, brought about by increasing press concentration, growing dependence on the revenue from advertising and the development of broadcast media. He links technical innovation in the operations of the media to the disintegration of the possibilities for rational discourse found in the press and ensuing public discussion in early bourgeois culture. Where the opportunities for public discourse arise in late capitalist culture, the media structure this process as one of commodification and subsequent consumption by a passive audience rather than as part of a process of discussion by rational participants. Habermas goes so far as to suggest that instead of guaranteeing a space for 'Öffentlichkeit' and public debate, the media in their contemporary form are helping to bring about a 'refeudalisation' of the public sphere. Contemporary media practices turn politics into a form of theatre, in which public acclamation and assent is sought eagerly while the general population is excluded from meaningful debate.¹³

Although the historical analysis contained in Habermas's account provides critics of the media with the concept of 'Öffentlichkeit', which is of considerable heuristic value for discussions of the role and functions of contemporary institutions, there are several normative aspects of Habermas's theory which have provoked much debate. His notion of the bourgeois public sphere has been attacked as intrinsically ideological because it is dependent on capital and on the patriarchal separation of the public and private realms.

¹³ See John B. Thompson, 'The Theory of the Public Sphere', Theory, Culture and Society, 10 (1993), p. 178.

In Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung, a study dedicated to the late Adorno and published in 1972, Negt and Kluge argued that the bourgeois public sphere negated its own material basis as it excluded the realm of production, and championed as an alternative a proletarian public sphere.¹⁴ Several feminist critiques have also questioned the emancipatory claims of Habermas's account, which is grounded on the separation and opposition of the public and private realms. This manoeuvre has traditionally operated to see men as endowed with the qualities required for full participation in public life, such as reason and civic responsibility, demonstrated in the readiness to undertake military service, and women excluded to the family sphere which is constituted outside the political formation.¹⁵

Despite its many flaws, however, Habermas's analysis of the public sphere and of the social role of the media was of crucial importance to the student movement and other oppositional groupings. It enabled a departure from critical theories either paralysed in a totalising cultural pessimism or based on individual emancipation, and it set out a theoretical grounding for the collective importance of communication and public enlightenment. The notion of the value of the public sphere to the enactment of democratic politics moved the role and operations of the media into the centre of political analysis and gave theoretical support to the need to establish a counter public sphere.

¹⁴ Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung. Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1972. On the class-based nature of 'Öffentlichkeit', see also Hohendahl, 'Critical Theory, Public Sphere, and Culture', pp. 104-09, Die Linke antwortet Jürgen Habermas, Frankfurt am Main, 1968, and Terry Eagleton, The Function of Criticism, Verso, London, 1984, particularly pp. 118-23.

¹⁵ Nancy Fraser argues the gendered nature of 'Öffentlichkeit' in 'What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender', Unruly Practices. Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory, Polity, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 113-43. For a more general critique of the gendered implications of separating public and private, see Carole Pateman, 'Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy', in S.I. Benn and G.F. Gaus (eds), Public and Private in Social Life, Croom Helm, London/Canberra, 1983, pp. 281-303.

The concept of 'Öffentlichkeit' is useful for understanding Enzensberger's cultural practice in this period, despite important differences between Habermas and Enzensberger.¹⁶ Habermas's topographical formulation of 'Öffentlichkeit' as a site or sphere can be productive for an analysis of political developments in this period. It represents communication as a material practice which takes place through institutions or discourses. This materiality can then allow certain projects to be traced which permit the exchange of critical opinion in a counter public sphere or 'Gegenöffentlichkeit'. In the Federal Republic in the second half of the 1960s, this alternative sphere consisted of an impressive range and quality of channels of publication set up and contributed to by a growing body of critical authors. Contributors included those drawn from the anti-authoritarian student movement, protestors against the 'Notstandsgesetze' and the collapse of formal political opposition with the emergence of the 'Große Koalition' in 1966 and, finally, intellectuals working within the universities and as journalists. Amongst these channels were large and established publishers such as Fischer, dtv, Rowohlt, and Suhrkamp, whose edition suhrkamp began in 1963, critical publications ranging from academic journals such as kürbiskern, konkret and Das Argument, to the alternative regional press and campus newspapers and the circulation of a number of pirate editions of theoretical works.¹⁷

Arguably the most important channel for the articulation of a new political agenda in this period was the journal, Kursbuch, founded by Enzensberger in 1965. His cultural practice in the late 1960s is closely related to the need to find new ways of articulating critical opposition to government policies. This channel was used to the full by Enzensberger to publish essays on politics, literature and cultural theory, which

¹⁶ Enzensberger's media theory is subsequently grounded on an optimism with regard to the emancipatory potential of the electronic media, whereas Habermas accuses them of acting against rational discussion. This, it must be remembered, is not solely owing to their commercial utilisation in late capitalism, but because they could not reproduce the kind of dialogic communication advocated by Habermas in his preferred form of the public sphere in the early bourgeois period. See Thompson, 'The Theory of the Public Sphere', p. 187.

¹⁷ See Burns and van der Will, Protest and Democracy in West Germany, p. 48 and Humphreys, Media and Media Policy in Germany, pp. 118-20.

responded to and helped to define the radical political and cultural changes occurring in the Federal Republic.

Enzensberger's dynamic reputation as an editor and analyst of the contemporary with an impressive range of international contacts led Siegfried Unseld of Suhrkamp to persuade him to head a new journal. In its original planning stages, it was intended to act as a co-ordinated European literary magazine with links in France and Italy, rather than as a forum for debates on contemporary politics and society. However, the journal was eventually named Kursbuch, which alludes to an early Enzensberger poem warning of the dangers of fascism which advised young readers to throw away poetry and to read factual material to achieve an understanding of society.¹⁸ Although Enzensberger later denied that the title was particularly significant¹⁹, the journal's historical development mirrors the advice given in the poem.²⁰ Though remaining true to its original project in its anti-provincial and increasingly global outlook, Kursbuch was soon devoting more space to political analysis and social theory and publishing less prose fiction and poetry than had originally been promised. The planned focus on contemporary European literature had been challenged as early as the second issue, which was organised thematically around liberation movements in the Third World and decolonisation.

Kursbuch soon staked a (lasting) claim to be the most important channel for Marxist-oriented criticism in the Federal Republic.²¹ The first twenty issues between 1965 and 1970 proved that, far from being superfluous to critical requirements as, for example,

¹⁸ Enzensberger, 'ins lesebuch für die oberstufe', verteidigung der wölfe, p. 85.

¹⁹ See Heinz D. Osterle, 'Interview with Hans Magnus Enzensberger on German-American Relations', New German Critique, 42, Fall 1987, p. 140.

²⁰ Van der Will, 'The German Literary Intelligentsia and the Anti-Authoritarian Movement', p. 42.

²¹ Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 62.

Die Zeit had charged²², it achieved rapid and wide cultural significance in the second half of the 1960s for promoting and popularising many of the ideas of the New Left and, more importantly, for introducing new themes and analysis into the programme of the anti-authoritarian movement.²³ In its early years, several pivotal themes emerged which reflected and shaped the main concerns of the west German Left. Apart from the debates in its pages on literary, cultural and media theory, which are prioritised in this study, Kursbuch conducted discussions of political theories, the student movement, and questions of power. It was also influential in articulating emergent ideas of the nature of political formations and social questions concerning feminism, the family and everyday life practices and in this way it helped to articulate a rethinking of the political division between the public and private spheres.²⁴

With a circulation of around 20 000, rising to 50 000 with reprints, Enzensberger's Kursbuch achieved both economic viability in a commercial market and a critical readership located within and outside universities. Significantly, this readership far exceeded in numbers the smaller elite of literary intellectuals who had acted up to that point as the most important dissenting formation. The success of Kursbuch as an independent, radical journal committed to the political enlightenment of its readership would certainly have given optimism to Enzensberger that there were opportunities to set in motion fora for democratic politics using a range of media. Under his editorship, Kursbuch not only provides an instance of an emerging public sphere at this time; it is doubly significant in that it also instigated within its pages extensive debate on the nature of literary and media politics.

²² Dieter Zimmer, 'Enzensbergers Kursbuch', Die Zeit, 2 July 1965, p. 11. See also the subsequent debate between Enzensberger and Zimmer, 'Nachträge zum Kursbuch. Enzensbergers Antwort auf einen ZEIT-Artikel - und eine Antwort auf eine Antwort', Die Zeit, 23 July 1965, p. 10.

²³ See Michael Buselmeier, 'Die Situation der Gegenwart', Frankfurter Hefte, 32 (7), p. 63.

²⁴ See Vibeke Rutzou Petersen, Kursbuch 1965-75. Social, Political and Literary Perspectives of West Germany, Peter Lang, New York, 1988.

IV

The 'Spiegel affair' in 1962 had provided a crucial test of the credibility of the post-war state's commitment to democratic institutions and values. It was significant in that it made concrete many of the misgivings articulated by commentators concerning the role of the media and the maintenance of a democratic public sphere. However, it was also a watershed in the political efficacy of the literary intelligentsia. It provided an occasion which allowed isolated intellectuals to unite around a specific issue in which questions of cultural politics were presented in concrete terms and not in an abstract or purely theoretical manner. The success of protests against government actions in this instance gave the grouping some political credibility and a rewarding measure of self-confidence.²⁵ Enzensberger's essay on the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', published in the same year, shared this confidence with its talk of the radical potential of the intellectuals in the cause of political enlightenment, arguing for 'Revision, statt Revolution' with regard to cultural politics. In Enzensberger's essays on political issues in the early editions of Kursbuch, however, the democratic credibility of the present political system becomes increasingly questioned.

The dissipation of confidence in the potential of the existing political settlement to safeguard democracy on the part of Enzensberger follows from his totalising suspicion of political government in Politik und Verbrechen in 1964. In this work, his equation of politics with criminality was argued through various case studies but ultimately rested on the American-led cold war policies of nuclear deterrence, which he saw as a continuation of the rationale of acceptable mass destruction which had led to Auschwitz.²⁶ This general political scepticism resurfaced in more immediate form in the second half of the 1960s, particularly around the pivotal issue of the 'Notstandsgesetze'. The Left opposed government plans for the right to suspend elements of the democratic constitution in the event of an 'emergency' situation. This

²⁵ See Richard Hinton Thomas and Keith Bullivant, Literature in Upheaval, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1974, pp. 32-33.

²⁶ Enzensberger, 'Reflexionen vor einem Glaskasten', Politik und Verbrechen, particularly pp. 18-21 and 36-39.

proposal was seen by critics as repeating the mistake made under the Weimar democracy which had ultimately destroyed the political order and secured Hitler's rise.²⁷ Enzensberger's initial criticism of these domestic political events in 1966 was scathing but not part of a revolutionary politics; according to his global analysis, true revolutionary change would only originate in the Third World anyway and not in industrially advanced countries.²⁸ The bankruptcy of German policy, not of the German political system as a whole, is claimed by Enzensberger in his declaration that '[d]ie Innenpolitik der Bundesregierung hat die Demokratie zur Schwerbeschädigten gemacht.'²⁹ In this speech, Enzensberger shows his faith in the democratic system of the Federal Republic. He emphasises his belief that parliament can still act democratically to reject the emergency proposals, and, in an important populist move, his faith in the democratic nature of the population as a whole, whose will acts as the final 'Verfassungsschutz'. This speech ends with the defence of the state in its present form and a plea not to let it become anti-democratic:

Die Republik, die wir haben, wird noch benötigt. Wenn man uns fragt, und wenn man uns nicht fragt, erst recht: Eine Bananenrepublik lassen wir aus diesem Land nicht werden.³⁰

In Enzensberger's view, the government was to an increasing extent revealing its true nature, not as the legislative body in the new liberal democracy, but as a formation

²⁷ For an account of the 'Notstandsgesetze' and the Left's reaction, see Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorki, The German Left. Red, Green and Beyond, Polity, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 54-55.

²⁸ See Enzensberger, 'Europäische Peripherie', Kursbuch 2, Frankfurt am Main, 1965. This essay sparked off a controversy with other Left intellectuals. See the debate with Peter Weiss reprinted in Grimm (ed), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, pp. 90-105.

²⁹ Enzensberger, 'Rede gegen die Notstandsgesetze', in Helmut Schauer (ed), Notstand der Demokratie. Diskussionsbeiträge und Materialien vom Kongreß am 30. Oktober 1966, Frankfurt am Main, 1967, p. 190.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

which in certain aspects was acting to allow a continuation of National Socialist anti-democracy. One manifestation of this could be detected in its treatment of political opponents. On receiving the 'Kulturpreis der Stadt Nürnberg' in March 1966, Enzensberger had declared in his acceptance speech that the money would be put into an account to support political prisoners in the Federal Republic. He alluded to a figure called Heizer Hieronymous, who had disappeared from the city's streets in the days of the Third Reich. In this speech, Enzensberger makes the connection between political conditions and the possibility for culture to be produced at all:

Der Heizer Hieronymous ist nicht spurlos verschwunden. Er ist wieder da, in andern Kellern, unter anderem Namen, und mir scheint, als verteidige er heute wie damals die Kultur, nicht diese oder jene oder unsere, sondern die Möglichkeit, daß überhaupt Kultur sei, gegen seine Ankläger und seine Richter.³¹

This is the relationship, whether explicitly articulated or merely implied, which underlies several of Enzensberger's statements in this period and which clearly comes to the fore in 1968 with his decision to concentrate his efforts on the political enlightenment of the population rather than on poetry. Enzensberger's comments in the Nürnberg speech were picked up and raised in the Bundestag, where Minister for Justice, Dr. Heinemann, rejected his accusations. In reply, Enzensberger accused the CDU-led government of criminalising political opposition, aided by the vigilance of the Springer press.³² He maintained that what was not understood by the government was that the opposition, the fear of which made the government resort to political persecution, did not consist of old communists or supporters of the GDR, but of something new, organised around a demand for real democracy. With reference to the recent shooting of the student, Benno Ohnesorg, by a policeman during a protest against the visit of the Shah of Iran to

³¹ Enzensberger, 'Rede vom Heizer Hieronymous', Staatsgefährdende Umtriebe. Offener Brief an Bundesjustizminister Heinemann, Voltaire Verlag, Berlin, 1968, p.13.

³² See Enzensberger, 'Bundestagsprotokoll' and 'Brief an den Bundesminister der Justiz', Staatsgefährdende Umtriebe, pp. 19-27.

west Berlin, an event which was seen to mark a turning point in the political settlement of the post-war period, Enzensberger registered his growing pessimism towards the nature of the state:

allzuviel Optimismus, Reformfreude, blindes Vertrauen auf die Staatsgewalt, das ist es, was ich mir vorzuwerfen habe. Noch im März dieses Jahres dachte ich, man riskiere wegen seiner politischen Gesinnung in diesem Lande weiter nichts, als vor Gericht gestellt zu werden. Inzwischen weiß ich anders. Wegen seiner politischen Gesinnung, ja selbst des Versuches wegen, sich eine politische Gesinnung zu verschaffen, die man gar nicht hat: bei dem Versuch, herauszufinden, was bei uns auf offener Straße geschieht, kann man auf offener Straße erschossen werden.³³

This political polarisation led Enzensberger to attempt to re-evaluate the relationship between politics and cultural production, with particular reference both to post-war literature in the Federal Republic and to the efficacy of the literary intelligentsia as a social formation. Enzensberger subsequently cited 1962 as the zenith of the idea of a critical literary intelligentsia:

Vor fünf Jahren waren die deutschen Nachkriegsschriftsteller eine gesellschaftliche Macht. Ihr Gewicht war, gemessen an anderen sozialen Gruppierungen, freilich gering. Immerhin mußten die Parteien, mußte die Regierung sie in Rechnung stellen; so schien es wenigstens in den schönen Sommertagen des Jahres 1962. Die namhafteren Autoren hatten keine ökonomischen Sorgen. Ihr Einfluß erstreckte sich nicht nur auf das Verlagswesen, das einen außerordentlichen Boom erlebte, sondern auch auf die Medien, die, seit dem Sieg der Alliierten, demokratisch verfaßt und unter der Kontrolle der Regierung entzogen waren.³⁴

³³ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

³⁴ Enzensberger, 'Klare Entscheidungen und trübe Aussichten', in Schickel (ed), Über Hans

Enzensberger recognised that the political position of the writers was becoming increasingly ambivalent and contradictory. He marked the real turning point in the credibility of the formation of literary intellectuals as coming when the SPD, which had enjoyed the active support of many writers, failed in the 1965 elections and then agreed a year later to join in a 'Große Koalition' with the CDU/CSU. This came about when the government tried to save its precarious position, brought on by recession, the unpopularity of Erhard and declining prestige. In Enzensberger's opinion,

[d]er sell-out war vollständig. Seitdem gibt es in Deutschland keine organisierte Opposition mehr. Die parlamentarische Regierungsform ist vollends zur Fassade für ein Machtkartell geworden, das der verfassungsmäßige Souverän, das Volk, auf keine Weise mehr beseitigen kann. Abstimmungen im Bundestag gleichen seitdem der Prozedur, die in den Volksdemokratien üblich ist; Debatten sind überflüssig geworden. Die Regierung ist dabei, diese Situation durch Manipulationen des Wahlrechtes und durch Notstandsgesetze zu zementieren. Das Ende der zweiten deutschen Demokratie ist absehbar.³⁵

This was a cultural, as well as a political, watershed. It meant the end for the kind of critical literature which had sought to shape public opinion on social and political issues. It had failed to open up a truly democratic public sphere in the face of the domination of public communication by the right-leaning popular press in support of an increasingly undemocratic government. This realisation resulted in the fracturing of the consensus which had coalesced around Gruppe 47, as competing radical political programmes were adopted. For Enzensberger, this also meant that reformist attempts within the political system had to end:

Das politische System der Bundesrepublik ist jenseits aller Reparatur. Man

Magnus Enzensberger, p. 225.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 230.

kann ihm zustimmen, oder man muß es durch ein neues ersetzen.³⁶

Enzensberger's evaluation of the relationship between culture and politics as a result of these developments is provisional: although the status of literature as a 'Narrenparadies für oppositionelle Schriftsteller' is over, he is unable to predict the cultural results of the radicalisation of many writers.

Access to a counter public sphere in the form of Kursbuch proved essential to Enzensberger as he succeeded in providing space for critical debate and in helping to set a radical agenda in the months following this political polarisation. In 1968, a year which saw several major essays by Enzensberger, he devoted a sequence of editions to the related themes of revolution in the Third World, an analysis of the struggle over the 'Notstandsgesetze' and the 'Berliner Sommer' of 1967, and, finally, to a consideration of the student movement and its political theory. He contributed a two-part article to this series which took stock of the political situation and repeated his analysis that the German liberal settlement could not be reformed, it had to be either accepted or replaced by something offering more convincing guarantees of democracy. Although his 'Berliner Gemeinplätze' essentially echo the criticism he had elsewhere levelled concerning the post-war political history of the Federal Republic, they include a fuller analysis of mistakes made and possible ways forward.

There is no doubt that the most important point for him is to address the concept of revolution in general and in particular in its possible form in the Federal Republic. His opening lines, which allude to Marx and Engels's Communist Manifesto, confirm that the ideas of reforming the political system have been superseded by events dictating the need for more radical action. However, the revolution in Europe lacks a class basis, which Enzensberger attributes to the success of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' in to a large extent liquidating the political consciousness of the general population. This is underlined by his analysis of the history of the Federal Republic and the path taken to

³⁶ Ibid.

privilege material growth at the expense of political debate. His critique of the period of consumer democracy is more damning than the argument he had articulated in Einzelheiten about the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. The depiction of the 'Wirtschaftswunder' is couched here with extensive reference to questions of political economy, suggesting that his analytical strategy was drawing more heavily on Marxist theory than earlier:

Der totale Ideologieverdacht wurde zur totalen Ideologie: Monopolmacht gab sich als soziale Marktwirtschaft, Massenkonsum als Reich der Freiheit, der von der Arbeiterklasse bezahlte Aufbau der Wirtschaft als Wunder aus, das die Heiligsprechung des Privateigentums rechtfertigen mußte.³⁷

He was also much harsher in his analysis of the specific contribution of the literary intelligentsia to political democracy, accusing it of ultimately acting out of self-interest and securing only its own position:

Zu Erfolgen hat sie es, nicht von ungefähr, nur auf einem einzigen Gebiet gebracht: bei der Verteidigung der Meinungsfreiheit, also bei der Vertretung ihrer eigenen Interessen und der Behauptung ihrer eigenen Privilegien - einer sicherlich legitimen, aber schwerlich hinreichenden politischen Aktivität. [...]
Eine politische Theorie, die diesen Namen verdienen würde, haben sie nicht hervorgebracht.³⁸

In Enzensberger's radical zeal there is no mention of his own contributions to the success of this social formation, of his own reluctance to theorise his sociological insights or indeed of his continuing location within this group, albeit one trying belatedly to theorise its own importance in the ongoing political conflict. Of more importance, though, is just how he attempts to theorise the present crisis. He reiterates

³⁷ Enzensberger, 'Berliner Gemeinplätze', p. 11.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

his analysis that revolution should be understood on a global scale and is more likely to be set in motion outside Germany. He writes that the organisation and operations of the domestic economic system mean that the ordinary German population cannot be regarded yet as a conscious historical agent. The 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' is highly effective at the present moment in securing the support of the general population for the political settlement, not least because the public is 'bought off' from questioning the status quo with a general rise in standards of living:

Aufklärung ist nötig aber nicht genug; die Bewußtseins-Industrie ist in festen Händen. [...] Solange seine technische Produktivität wächst, und so lange ein Teil dieses Zuwachses als gesteigerter Konsumstandard ausgeschüttet wird, scheint der totale Konsensus gesichert; die Entpolitisierung der Massen schreitet fort.³⁹

Although it is the actions of the general population which will be decisive, Enzensberger dismisses the idea of a single 'revolutionary subject' in favour of a fluid, unstable range of actual and potential subjects involved in local struggles. Enzensberger maintains that this crisis has resulted in a new form of fascism, 'ein alltäglicher, einhäusiger, verinnerlichter, institutionell gesicherter und maskierter Faschismus'⁴⁰, under which the student movement has been constituted by the media as the enemy within, which the system requires to legitimate its actions. The new oppositional groupings battling this fascism are warned of the immense difficulties of their plans to disturb the workings of authoritarian institutions while simultaneously setting up counter institutions and practices. They still have to come to terms with the challenge of integrating the ordinary population into this moment, bearing in mind the hold on political consciousness attributed by Enzensberger to the operations of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. Enzensberger's increasingly radical political analysis has important consequences for his understanding of the role of contemporary cultural production and

³⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

leads him to argue the need for a revolution to embrace the cultural sphere. This argument takes two main forms concerning, first, the contribution of literature to revolutionary consciousness and, second, opposition to the strategic workings of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' through a radical theory of the media.

V

Doch der Prozeß der Aufklärung, der sich in Europa zu entfalten beginnt, unterscheidet sich grundsätzlich von allen Formen, deren sich Intellektuelle bedient haben, um ihre Kritik, ihren Protest, ihren Widerspruch zu artikulieren. Daran, daß die Kulturrevolution vom Schriftsteller gemacht werden könnte, denkt niemand. Es bedarf einer Einheit von Theorie und Praxis, die schwierig sein wird. Es bedarf sehr konkreter Aktionen auf den Straßen und in den Nervenzentren der Metropolen. Die revolutionäre Tätigkeit, wie sehr auch von einer Minderheit getragen, muß sich in ein entscheidendes Moment bei der Aufklärungsarbeit unter den Massen verwandeln.⁴¹

The sociology of culture which was implicit in Enzensberger's essays on literature and on the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' in the 1962 collection Einzelheiten was formulated in relation to a political settlement which had now been called into question. The crisis of liberal democracy in its post-war German form and the political radicalisation of oppositional groupings in the second half of the 1960s necessitated a rethinking of cultural politics, not least concerning the operations of the media and the role and function of literature. The political crisis could, for Enzensberger, be solved only through acceptance of the status quo or through revolution, not through reform. His conception of the form of revolution required had moved from merely a local phenomenon, which would secure the promises of the German constitution against the CDU-led government, to a position drawing on Marxist political economy which, in line

⁴¹ Enzensberger, in Arqueles Morales, 'Entrevista con Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1969)', in Grimm (ed), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 110.

with global struggles, sought the socialisation of the means of production.

The revolutionary position taken up in political debate was accompanied by the expression of the need for cultural revolution, described by Enzensberger as 'ein unentbehrliches und zugleich verführerisches Konzept'.⁴² He devoted an issue of Kursbuch at the height of the political crisis in 1968 to an examination of literature and literary criticism, which moved this discussion into the mainstream of public debate.⁴³ Many critics understood Enzensberger's essay in this volume of Kursbuch to have confirmed the 'death' of literature.⁴⁴ However, as he later insisted, and with justification, he had argued that the supposed crisis of literature had been its fundamental condition of existence for over a century and the idea of the 'death' of literature was itself a common literary metaphor.⁴⁵ In spite of Enzensberger's protestations of innocence, his condemnation of post-war German literature in this essay is harsher than before, as he accuses west German society of using literature to compensate for the lack of political opposition and to act as an 'Alibi im Überbau':

Die Literatur sollte eintreten für das, was in der Bundesrepublik nicht vorhanden war, ein genuin politisches Leben. So wurde die Restauration bekämpft, als wäre sie ein literarisches Phänomenon, nämlich mit literarischen Mitteln [...] je mehr die westdeutsche Gesellschaft sich stabilisierte, desto dringender verlangte sie nach Gesellschaftskritik in der Literatur; je folgenloser das Engagement der Schriftsteller blieb, desto lauter wurde nach ihm gerufen.⁴⁶

⁴² Ibid., p. 106.

⁴³ See Hinton Thomas and Bullivant, Literature in Upheaval, p. 69.

⁴⁴ See Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 69.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Enzensberger's argument can be found in Enzensberger, 'Gemeinplätze, die neueste Literatur betreffend', Palaver, p. 42. This essay first appeared in the notorious Kursbuch 15, November 1968, pp. 187-97.

⁴⁶ Enzensberger, 'Gemeinplätze', pp. 44-45.

In this essay, Enzensberger also rejects the contemporary viability of Adorno's position on the autonomy of the work of art, whose aesthetic form itself is utopian and negates the political condition. Enzensberger stresses the ability of late capitalism to absorb formal innovations and to return them to commodity form:

Auf industriellen Umwegen, über Werbung, Design und Styling gehen sie jedoch früher oder später, meist aber früher, fugenlos in die Konsumsphäre ein.⁴⁷

Literature is not only therefore politically harmless, disqualified from claims to enlightenment, to critical or utopian potential, but also it performs no essential social role either. With a view to his own position, and in a remark which was taken by critics to spell a call for the abandonment of literary production in the Federal Republic, Enzensberger declared the inherent social uselessness of literature:

[w]er Literatur als Kunst macht, ist damit nicht widerlegt, er kann aber nicht mehr gerechtfertigt werden.⁴⁸

This statement has important consequences for Enzensberger's cultural politics. What is at stake here is the idea that at the moment when literature is produced, it is always done 'auf Verdacht', without any guarantees of social or political efficacy. This is not advocating the abandonment of literature, and indeed even at this time Enzensberger was working on poems and pieces for the theatre, but the abandonment of grand authorial claims to social or political consequence. Literature is seen here as operating not autonomously, but as a modest practice within a larger, more powerful and determinant cultural apparatus. Instead of attacking literature itself, which according to Enzensberger, marks the extent of the cultural revolution envisaged by some protesters, his essay proposes that the real target of the cultural revolution should be the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. Moreover, he points out a genuine social role for those

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

writers seeking one, namely the 'politische Alphabetisierung Deutschlands'⁴⁹, suggesting as possible models reportage, documentary prose and political journalism.

Enzensberger develops this analysis in an interview given during his stay in Cuba in 1969. Asked about the possibility of a revolutionary literature, he responded that, like many writers world-wide, he was committed to the search for forms of writing which would support revolutionary struggles. However, as a cultural critic, he claimed simultaneously to understand that the literary forms inherited by writers after the bourgeois revolutions in the nineteenth century appeared to have little to contribute to contemporary revolutionary movements.⁵⁰ Instead, he argued again that a cultural revolution could only be achieved through finding strategies to counter the hegemonic projects of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. He explained how the political concept of revolution must be linked to the notion of a 'Kulturrevolution' and argued for the central importance of the realm of culture and of cultural contestation to conflicts which appeared to be taking place in the spheres of politics and economics. He emphasised that the relationship between the base and superstructure, as articulated in classical Marxist theory in the nineteenth century, had altered drastically in the advanced industrial nations during the twentieth century as a consequence of increasing industrialisation and, crucially, of the growth and strategic importance of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. In these countries there dominates

ein von Mal zu Mal sich verschärfender Widerspruch zwischen der Entwicklung

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 53.

⁵⁰ 'Für mich steht es außer Zweifel, daß sie [die Vorläufer der bürgerlichen Revolution] eine große Literatur hervorgebracht haben, mit Gattungen, Formen, Gehalten – eine Literatur, die vollständig anders war als diejenige der Feudalzeit. Sie schufen, mit einem Wort, eigene und neue Werte und Strukturen. Im Gegensatz dazu hat die sozialistische Revolution zwar ebenfalls wichtige Werke hervorgebracht; ihr gesamtes Kulturschaffen blieb jedoch in das alte Wertsystem gebannt und ist bis heute von der kulturellen Vormundschaft des Bürgertums abhängig. Ebensowenig ist es gelungen, die kulturelle Weltherrschaft der Bourgeoisie, insbesondere im Bereich der Literatur, zu brechen.' Enzensberger, in Morales, 'Entrevista con Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1969)', p. 114.

der Produktivkräfte und der Bewußtseinsentwicklung der Massen, die ihnen nachhinkt. Der Spätkapitalismus vermag sich dadurch, daß er diesen Widerspruch stärkt, am Leben zu erhalten. Denn die politische und gesellschaftliche Blockierung des Bewußtseins, die immaterielle Ausbeutung, ist die conditio sine qua non für die Fortdauer der materiellen Ausbeutung.⁵¹

The enormous development of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', the key industry under capitalism, involves primarily the manipulation of the subjugated population.⁵²

Again, although he emphasises that the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' is mobilised to great effect to manipulate desires, he repeats his argument that it is not monolithic:

Dennoch verursacht sie unweigerlich Widersprüche, die dem System gefährlich werden können.⁵³

He also states crucially that, in his criticism of the operations of the 'Bewußtseins-industrie', the object of his attack is not the tendency of the general population in the Federal Republic to seek an improved standard of living, but the overall political settlement:

Ich teile übrigens die gängige Kritik an der Konsumgesellschaft ganz und gar nicht, sondern halte derlei für schlichtweg reaktionär. Den lohnabhängigen Massen zu predigen, daß Konsumieren eine Art Erbsünde sei, ist so nutzlos wie unpolitisch. Die Arbeiter sind vollauf im Recht, wenn sie jeweils einen höheren Lebensstandard verlangen; unrecht haben hingegen gewisse frustrierte und moralisierende Intellektuelle, welche sich den Luxus einer Sehnsucht nach dem "einfachen Leben" leisten, die ihrem Wesen nach konservativ ist. Nicht einfach

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 110-11.

⁵² Ibid., p. 109.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 109.

das Anwachsen des Konsums bewirkt, daß Unstimmigkeiten, Irrationalität, Verschleiß und Verschmutzung grassieren, sondern eine ganz bestimmte Gesellschaftsordnung.⁵⁴

This observation heralds an important development in Enzensberger's cultural politics, which marks his move away from a general position where ordinary people are seen as a mass of duped consumers, often complicit in their manipulation. Considerable attention is paid in his subsequent writing to populist approaches to the political position of the general population. Initially, he focuses on popular access to, and utilisation of, the very technologies employed by the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie':

Gefordert wird vielmehr eine Veränderung in der Struktur der Medien selbst, die unter Verwendung der modernsten, jedermann zugänglichen Mittel der Technik in eine riesige Wandzeitung nicht nur an Mauern, sondern auch in Rundfunk- und Fernsehgeräten umfunktioniert werden sollen.⁵⁵

This call to democratise the media by ensuring widespread opportunities to broadcast messages as well as to receive them, whereby ordinary people become media producers as well as consumers, is a key moment in Enzensberger's cultural strategy. It is developed substantially in his major essay on cultural politics in late capitalism, the 'Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien'.⁵⁶ This essay marks the theoretical reworking of his insights into the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' to meet the challenges of the political crisis in the late-1960s. If Enzensberger's original essay on the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' had been formulated within a moment of opposition which was critical but reformist, aiming at a revision of a system which was still ultimately supported, then this essay

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 108-09.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 110.

⁵⁶ First published in Kursbuch 20, March 1970, pp. 159-86, and reprinted in Enzensberger, Palaver, pp. 91-129.

speaks out of a commitment to local and global political revolution.⁵⁷ It was published originally in Kursbuch 20 in 1970, a year which witnessed the early stages of the breaking up of the student-led protest movement. This marks what became termed the 'Tendenzwende', as frustrations at the failure of revolutionary politics became channelled into a number of manifestations of a concern with the relationship of the subject to social forces. This issue of Kursbuch, devoted to questions of aesthetics, registers in its contents the uneasy emergence of new enquiries (and new literary extracts) alongside fragments of Benjamin's Marxist literary theory and Haug's 'Zur Kritik der Warenästhetik'.

Enzensberger's earlier theoretical position had attributed a political importance to the social and critical agency of the left-liberal intelligentsia at a time when this group enjoyed cultural significance through the production of a new German literature and public prominence as political commentators. With the changing political formation occasioned by the radicalisation of politics by the student movement, Enzensberger's revised cultural theory marginalised the significance of literature to the process of political enlightenment and instead promoted alternative cultural forms and practices such as non-fiction writing and increased public access to the media. His new theory also places much more significance in political economy, arguing for the socialisation of ownership of the media as a necessary condition for political democracy.

Enzensberger's long essay quotes from both Benjamin and Brecht and borrows their radical aesthetic of emancipation to articulate a strategy for ensuring the democratic ownership of the media. It follows the line maintained in their arguments with Adorno

⁵⁷ Enzensberger's critique of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' was initially politically neutral insofar as he insisted that it was a phenomenon common to both capitalist and socialist systems of government. In an important reformulation, he argues that it has expanded in a direction which far exceeds its original social function, namely to maintain the existing relations of power within a specific state. He sees it now operating on a global scale in order to aid the hegemonic programmes of imperialistic powers. See Enzensberger, in Morales, 'Entrevista con Hans Magnus Enzensberger', pp. 110-14.

about the consequences of technology for cultural politics.⁵⁸ Enzensberger accuses Adorno, along with Horkheimer and Lukács, of a form of nostalgia for early bourgeois culture. He aligns himself explicitly with Benjamin as he attempts to rethink the social function of the media with a commitment to a radical democratisation of the structures of communication. With the formulation of the 'death' of literature, or more accurately the absence of a guaranteed political effect for literary texts, it is logical that he should turn his attention to the institutions which appear to have taken over the social prestige of literature and which assume real power in determining political consciousness. In this way, Enzensberger's media theory can be read as the obverse of his sociology of literature. He even includes a theory of literature which places emphasis on its materiality, on its technologies of production and distribution, and so subsumes it as an early cultural practice in a larger media theory, where the media are theorised as material sites of cultural production, and where literature

dürfte als Grenzfall in das System der neuen Medien integriert werden und dabei die Reste seiner kultischen und rituellen Aura einbüßen.⁵⁹

Enzensberger's theory starts out from the acceptance that the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' acts to set the pace for social and economic development, again reversing the classic Marxist dependence of superstructure on base. The devastating point for a radical politics of the media is that their technological form contains emancipatory potential, which is blocked under capitalism and Stalinism. At precisely the moment that Enzensberger declares the political harmlessness of literature, the power to mobilise the population is exactly the potential he locates in the operations of the media:

Wenn ich mobilisieren sage, so meine ich mobilisieren. In einem Land, das den Faschismus (und den Stalinismus) am eigenen Leib erfahren hat, ist es vielleicht immer noch oder schon wieder nötig zu erklären, was das heißt, nämlich, die

⁵⁸ See Chapter One, pp. 31-32.

⁵⁹ Enzensberger, 'Baukasten', Palaver, p. 124.

Menschen beweglicher machen als sie sind. Frei wie Tänzer, geistesgegenwärtig wie Fußballspieler, überraschend wie Guerilleros.⁶⁰

According to Enzensberger, the emancipatory power of the media comes from the fact that media technology is ultimately egalitarian: it can act as both transmitter and receiver but under capitalism this technology is distributed in partial form to ensure that there is a clear division between media producers and consumers. Despite a certain romanticised and erroneous view of media technology, and a naivety about the very real questions of access to and skill in utilising the technologies of media production, Enzensberger's optimism here must be stressed. The negation of the possibility of political emancipation which Enzensberger had identified as the central operation of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' should as a consequence of this analysis be seen as contingent on the utilisation of technology under capitalism, and not as an essential feature of the media. For Enzensberger, like Benjamin, the technologies of the media are not merely politically neutral; they contain the potential for a politics of liberation by allowing the general population to be active as cultural producers. However, Enzensberger's optimism, based on the assumption that technological form alone determines the political potential of the media, underestimates the resilience and deep foundations of capital's structuring of communication. As Stanley Aronowitz argues, this analysis assumes that decentralisation of communication is meaningful under conditions governed by the global monopoly of communication and information.⁶¹

Importantly, Enzensberger argues that the technological development of the communication media also acts against the ability of the state-directed 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' to regulate and control the flow of information. Enzensberger attacks as defeatist previous Left criticisms of the media, which were based exclusively on the concept of manipulation. In the hostility of the Left to the media, Enzensberger

⁶⁰ Enzensberger, 'Baukasten', pp. 92-93.

⁶¹ Stanley Aronowitz, 'Enzensberger on popular culture. A review essay', Minnesota Review, 1976, p. 97.

identifies bourgeois elements such as fear of the masses and a desire for a pre-industrial utopia. The latter could, he argues, be seen in the flawed strategies of the students in Paris in 1968 who resorted to archaic craft-based technologies when more advanced and effective media were available. The inconsistent attitude of the Left to the media is consolidated when Enzensberger points out that these radicals have no reservations about their involvement in media consumption:

Vermutlich hören ihre Produzenten die Rolling Stones, verfolgen auf dem Bildschirm Invasionen und Streiks und gehen ins Kino zum Western oder zu Godard; nur in ihrer Eigenschaft als Produzenten sehen sie davon ab, und in ihren ganzen Analysen schrumpft der ganze Mediensektor auf das Stichwort Manipulation zusammen.⁶²

The consequence of this media hostility, according to Enzensberger, is that their potential is only explored by a depoliticised counter-culture, not by radical political movements which could challenge the exploitation of the media under capitalism.

Given Enzensberger's previous inclination to see the intellectuals as the vanguard against the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', with the population at large given little chance to display anything other than victim status, his theory takes a populist turn. He dismisses elitist Left assertions that the working classes have been 'verblödet' by the media and need a group to speak on their behalf. He reiterates that they are not manipulated by 'Konsumterror' into fulfilling false needs either. Enzensberger sees consumption as more complex, overlapping with important desires:

Die Anziehungskraft des Massenkonsums beruht aber nicht auf dem Oktroi falscher, sondern auf der Verfälschung und Ausbeutung ganz realer und legitimer Bedürfnisse, ohne die der parasitäre Prozeß der Reklame hinfällig wäre. Eine sozialistische Bewegung hat diese Bedürfnisse nicht zu denunzieren,

⁶² Enzensberger, 'Baukasten', p. 100.

sondern ernst zu nehmen, zu erforschen und politisch produktiv zu machen.⁶³

In the attraction of so many people to features which Enzensberger, acknowledging Henri Lefebvre, calls the spectacle of consumption, consisting of goods on display, shop windows and advertising, he identifies elements of utopian longing for the disappearance of want and for a new political ecology which cannot be fully accommodated under capitalism:

Der Konsum als Spectacle verspricht das Verschwinden des Mangels. Die attrappenhaften, brutalen und obszönen Züge dieses Festes rühren daher, daß von der realen Einlösung dieses Versprechens keine Rede sein kann. Solange der Mangel herrscht, bleibt der Gebrauchswert eine entscheidende Kategorie, die nur betrügerisch liquidiert werden kann. Doch ist der Betrug von solchen Dimensionen nur denkbar, wenn er sich auf ein massenhaftes Bedürfnis einläßt. Dieses Bedürfnis, ein utopisches, ist vorhanden. Es ist das Verlangen nach einer neuen Ökologie, nach einer Entgrenzung der Umwelt, nach einer Ästhetik, die sich nicht auf die Sphäre des 'Kunstschönen' beschränkt.⁶⁴

Enzensberger insists that these desires are not caused by the operations of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' – they are not 'verinnerlichte Spielregeln des kapitalistischen Systems'.⁶⁵ For Enzensberger, these desires pre-exist the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' and are physiologically rooted. Crucially, Enzensberger perceives a utopian sensibility at work in them:

Die Schaustellung des Konsums ist die parodistische Vorwegnahme einer utopischen Situation.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ibid., p. 110.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 109-10.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 110

⁶⁶ Ibid. Richard Dyer develops Enzensberger's ideas relating to a 'utopian sensibility' in

Under capitalism, popular culture and consumption can only offer 'temporary answers to the inadequacies of the society which is being escaped from through entertainment'.⁶⁷ The socialist model for the media, however, aims to ensure the real fulfilment of the promises made and then broken in consumption by a capitalist 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'.

However commonplace this statement might seem in the late 1990s, after at least ten years of essays on the 'politics of consumption', it is a remarkably radical move for its time, taking issue with the traditional Left concepts of 'manipulation' and 'false needs' in relation to the media.⁶⁸ It is not without its problems, however. As Habermas has shown, the whole question of the relationship between the attraction to spectacle and public participation in the political process is more complex than Enzensberger's identification of utopian desires concedes. For Habermas, this process of spectacle would be less positive, given his argument that the attraction of the spectacular already points away from political emancipation and in the direction of the refeudalisation of the public sphere.⁶⁹

Although Enzensberger's identification of positive, utopian elements in the operations of the media and in the sphere of consumption lead him here towards a more populist position, his media strategy only encourages mass participation in the mainstream media in the institutions of production.⁷⁰ As John Hartley has argued, this argument is only

his analysis of musicals. See Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', in Bill Nicholls (ed), Movies and Methods (Volume II), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985, pp. 220-32, particularly pp. 227-28.

⁶⁷ Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', p. 227.

⁶⁸ See also *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Peters, 'Distrust of representation', p. 547.

⁷⁰ 'Dagegen muß eine jede sozialistische Strategie der Medien die Isolation der einzelnen Teilnehmer am gesellschaftlichen Lern- und Produktionsprozeß aufzuheben trachten. Das ist ohne Selbstorganisation der Beteiligten nicht möglich'. Enzensberger, Baukasten', p. 106.

populist up to a point:

while arguing for the appropriation of the means of discursive production as an essential element of socialist strategy, it disallows evidence of what 'the masses' might actually want to do with the media themselves.⁷¹

In this way, the vanguardist position that Enzensberger is trying to move beyond returns in another guise. Any media politics becomes dependent on the self-organisation of the public according to socialist strategy, while the existing use(s) of the media by individuals is ruled out as apolitical, despite the possibility that the media 'may suffuse popular culture in ways that challenge socialist orthodoxies'.⁷²

Enzensberger goes on in his essay to challenge one of the few critics to have attempted, by this stage, a long analysis of media culture, Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan is accused of a complete failure to understand social processes, of an inability to theorise his findings, and of mystification. Nevertheless, he wins praise for highlighting the productive force of the media and although his most famous dictum adds to the mystification of the media, Enzensberger reads it against the grain:

Der Satz, das Medium sei die Botschaft, übermittelt jedoch noch eine andere Botschaft, die viel wichtiger ist. Er teilt uns mit, daß die Bourgeoisie zwar über alle möglichen Mittel verfügt, um uns etwas mitzuteilen, daß sie jedoch nichts mehr zu sagen hat [...] sie wünscht sich Medien als solche und für nichts.⁷³

For Enzensberger, the media can be used to channel meaningful emancipatory

⁷¹ See John Hartley, The Politics of Pictures: The creation of the public in the age of the popular media, Routledge, London, 1992, pp. 23-24.

⁷² Ibid., p. 24.

⁷³ Enzensberger, 'Baukasten', p. 118.

messages. He dismisses McLuhan's technological determinist interpretation of the lack of meaning in media content, which he sees as resulting from the use of the media in the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' and therefore governed by a specific political economy, rather than as structural.

It is productive to compare Enzensberger's account of the media with that of one of his fiercest critics, Jean Baudrillard, who explicitly rejects Enzensberger's avowal of democratic participation in the media. The debate between Enzensberger and Baudrillard is important, not only for the way Baudrillard's critique highlights some of the assumptions and implications of Enzensberger's 'Baukasten' theory, but also for understanding Enzensberger's later work on television when there is considerable shared ground between the two critics.⁷⁴ Enzensberger's theoretical optimism is grounded on his belief that the content of the messages carried through the media can be meaningful, and that it is possible to replace the ideological import of the media from one complicit with capitalism to one which communicates an emancipatory discourse. He argues that the media have a capacity to reveal our historical position and so to show how official history is a construct and also that when participation in the media is collectivised, the messages broadcast can be liberating. The assumption that media content is at all meaningful is a premise challenged by Baudrillard's critique. For Baudrillard, Enzensberger's theory does not represent an advance on more traditional Marxist media analysis. It is so bound to an explanation of society through conditions of material exchange and, particularly, of the assumed contradiction between forces and relations of production that it adopts this model for the complex area of communication and signification. This model repeats the claim about technology and productive forces that 'they are the promise of human fulfilment but capitalism freezes or confiscates them'.⁷⁵ Baudrillard objects that this model leads Enzensberger to propose the emancipation of the media by way of a popular take-over of existent forms of communication with the

⁷⁴ See Chapter Six, pp. 266-69.

⁷⁵ Jean Baudrillard, 'Requiem for the Media', For a critique of the political economy of the sign, Telos, St Louis, 1981, p. 168.

subsequent replacement at the level of message content, or ideology, confirming a post-capitalist and therefore liberated media. Baudrillard refuses to conceive that the media communicate ideological meanings in this way. The technological structure of the media in itself guarantees the nature of the media, not the content of communication:

Not only is their destiny far from revolutionary; the media are not even, somewhere else or potentially, neutral or non-ideological (the phantasm of their technical status or of their social use value). Reciprocally, ideology does not exist in some place apart, as the discourse of the dominant class, before it is channelled through the media.⁷⁶

For Enzensberger, there is no technical barrier to the transformation of the media into effective and emancipated means of communication, but Baudrillard's position operates with a fundamentally different understanding of media technologies. Though critical of McLuhan's optimism, Baudrillard prefers his model. He maintains that the ideology of the media operates at the level of technological form, not as content, and that therefore the media are essentially always already ideological. Their technology operates to prevent mediation or communication. In this way, the media simply cannot be part of an emancipated system of communication, whether aiding a radical movement or afterwards, as 'they are always what prevents response'.⁷⁷ Therefore, the only truly revolutionary media strategy would be one which did not attempt to democratise content or to socialise the ownership of the media, but tried to restore the possibility of response. Baudrillard's position here, while rejecting a revolutionary theory of the media, allows only for subversion of the basic media code through non-mediated dialogue. He applauds the 'archaic' media used in Paris in 1968, which Enzensberger had attacked as anti-industrial, for restoring the opportunity for response and exchange:

The real revolutionary media during May were the walls and their speech, the

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 169.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 170.

silk-screen posters and the hand-painted notices, the street where speech began and was exchanged - everything that was an immediate inscription, given and returned, spoken and answered, mobile in the same space and time, reciprocal and antagonistic.⁷⁸

It is at this point, with his privileging as meaningful, communication constructed as a dialogue and modelled on speech and the emergence of conversation that Baudrillard comes closest to the arch-rationalist Habermas, who shares his misgivings about the emancipatory potential of media content. Ironically, Baudrillard's theory of the media as monologic and preventative of the mutual exchange of meaning is a charge which echoes Enzensberger's critique of literature itself.

VI

The cultural strategy set out by Enzensberger in 'Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien', in 1970 is reinforced in comments made by the author in an interview given the same year to the east German journal, Weimarer Beiträge.⁷⁹ Enzensberger talks here in some detail about his own cultural practices and the role of the media and literature in contemporary political struggles. For Enzensberger, these spheres are closely connected. Not only are writers able to write for the media, but this work in turn changes the type of writing subsequently undertaken:

sicherlich ist die Arbeit mit den Medien, an den Medien und durch die Medien eine Arbeit, die auf die schriftstellerische Arbeit, auf die kulturelle Arbeit überhaupt zurückwirkt und sie verändert.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 176.

⁷⁹ Ursula Reinhold, 'Interview mit Hans Magnus Enzensberger', Weimarer Beiträge, 1971 (5), pp. 73-93. Reprinted in Reinhold, Tendenzen und Autoren, Dietz, Berlin, 1982, pp. 136-158. Subsequent footnotes refer to the reprinted version.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

Although this interview was given at roughly the same time as the first publication of the 'Baukasten' essay, Enzensberger bemoans the lack of a concrete media strategy in the Federal Republic. However, his answers reveal a coherent position regarding the west German media and record his present activities and future plans. He repeats his rejection of the theory that the media can have total power to manipulate society, a theory attributed by the interviewer to Adorno and Marcuse, and advocates instead a strategy based on two methods of attack. This strategy would involve writing critical pieces for the media under their present conditions of ownership, while at the same time seeking to establish new media institutions run by opponents of German capitalism. Enzensberger pursued both courses of action, severing Kursbuch's links with Suhrkamp in 1977 in order to run it on a non-profit making basis as an independent publication.

Significantly, in Enzensberger's understanding of the relationship between the media and their assumed audience in this political struggle, he again refuses to condemn mass audiences in the Federal Republic. Instead of attacking the materialism and devotion to consumption of ordinary west Germans, which might be expected in an interview with an east German journal, he traces the desire for ostentatious consumption back to the historical situation of the generation of Germans who had known hunger and poverty during the Second World War. He empathises with their inability to stand back and question the consequences of the drive to material prosperity and consumption:

Sie haben diese Leistung als ihre eigene verstanden und haben nicht verstanden, daß das gleichzeitig eine immer weiter verschärfte Ausbeutung war, daß diese Akkumulation auf Kosten der Arbeiterklasse ging. Das war für niemanden eigentlich einsehbar; denn was die Leute sahen, war, daß es ihnen von Jahr zu Jahr besser ging.⁸¹

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 145.

Any attempt to change the nature of west German society obviously has to confront this situation and Enzensberger is adamant that neither political seminars nor critical theory can make effective inroads into the dominant social attitudes. Attempts to reach a wider public through critical writing are doomed to failure:

Das Massenpublikum, das die Fußballweltmeisterschaften oder Vico Torriani im Fernsehen sieht, dieses Publikum, das die "Sankt-Pauli-Nachrichten" jede Woche zu sich nimmt, die Bild-Zeitung liest und vielleicht noch Landser-Heftchen, ist durch das ganze Spektrum von Publikationen, welcher Spielart auch immer, gesellschaftskritischer Schriften, theoretischer Schriften von Bakunin bis Mao Zedong gar nicht zu erreichen.⁸²

In an illuminating comment concerning the relationship between critical intellectuals and other social groups, Enzensberger explains that attempts to educate the masses through critical theory only serve to meet the intellectuals' own needs. Nevertheless, Enzensberger's own use of television suggests that he too might fall into this position. For example, he explains how his participation in the congress 'Notstand der Demokratie' came about not because the intellectuals thought that the congress itself could prevent the passing of the 'Notstandsgesetze', but because there had been a guarantee of television coverage of the events. This ensured the possibility of reaching a large viewing public, even though the intellectuals involved were fully aware that their speeches were mere gestures and had little hope of effecting an immediate abandonment of the proposed legislation.

Enzensberger's ideas for utilising more effectively popular media forms are also expressed in this interview. With regard to television, he notes that even when programmes with a critical intent are broadcast, viewers prefer to find something less exacting to watch:

⁸² Ibid., p. 151.

Aber die Leute schalten dann ab, die Leute schalten dann auf den anderen Kanal, auf den Kanal, wo etwas Unterhaltsames zu sehen ist, ein Krimi oder so etwas.⁸³

Instead of criticising these viewing habits, Enzensberger considers them in the full context of everyday life practices and finds the wish to be entertained perfectly legitimate after a long day at work. With this in mind, he proposes that critical intellectuals try to make entertaining programmes themselves instead of condemning programmes which meet popular tastes:

Das möchte ich jedenfalls einmal versuchen. Das muß politisch und unterhaltsam sein, das braucht sich doch nicht gegenseitig auszuschließen. Ich möchte auch gern einmal einen Film machen oder eine Fernsehoper. Ich habe sogar einmal mit der Idee gespielt, eine Operette zu machen. Das ist eine sehr populäre Form, sehr massenwirksam.⁸⁴

Enzensberger declares that pop music, rather than poetry, offers the chance for writers to communicate political ideas to a broader audience:

Deshalb würde ich viel lieber beispielweise Texte für eine Beat-Band schreiben. Das hat politischen Effekt, das hat schon eher eine gewisse Breitenwirkung und hat etwas Gewisses, das kann man sich merken, das singt, das summt man vor sich hin, das hört man immer wieder. Leider gibt es in Deutschland keine solche Tradition wie in England und in den Vereinigten Staaten.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., p. 151.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 154. Enzensberger did indeed work with Hans Werner Henze on several musical collaborations between 1970 and 1973. He also wrote the lyrics for songs for Ingrid Caven, set to music by Peer Raban in 1979 and 1980.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 152.

Importantly, Enzensberger argues that media consumption is not only dependent on the content of the programme or song, but also that both the structure of the product and of the institutional organisations which provide the conditions for cultural reception are determining factors. He stresses that nothing will be achieved by changing the ideological content of cultural products but not their structure. This goes for literature as well as for television programmes. Poetry is given little chance of effecting political change both because of its structural nature - 'eine elitäre Form mit monologischem Charakter'⁸⁶ - and because of the conditions under which it circulates in society - 'die Institution der Lesung verschluckt das, was in der Lesung gesagt wird'.⁸⁷

Although in this interview, as in the 'Baukasten' essay, Enzensberger set out first and foremost to articulate a theory and practical strategy for utilising the media on the side of the Left in the Federal Republic, these pieces also suggest the retention of a place, albeit marginal, for literature. Not quite able to abandon writing as a cultural practice, Enzensberger grants it a status as a 'Grenzfall'. Literature is redefined as a modest, marginal practice within the sphere of commodified culture, written 'auf Verdacht', with no guarantees of its efficacy as a practice opposing the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. He proposes considering it simply as one medium among (more modern, technological) others. Although these aims are not completely original - they coincide with those of an earlier generation of German cultural theorists, not least Walter Benjamin⁸⁸ - they leave Enzensberger in an interesting position as a writer. His publications in the years immediately after 1970 reveal, not the abandonment of literature, but experiments with different literary forms. In the five years separating the 'Baukasten' essay from his next full volume of poetry, Enzensberger's publications include essays for Kursbuch, but also

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 152.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 153.

⁸⁸ See Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit', Illuminationen, pp. 136-169 and Benjamin, 'Der Autor als Produzent', Versuche über Brecht, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1966. Enzensberger notes his own debt at this time to Benjamin's writing on literary authenticity in Reinhold, 'Interview mit Hans Magnus Enzensberger', p. 141.

new forms of writing which raise questions concerning the status of the author and the traditional literary differentiation between fiction and non-fiction.

CHAPTER FIVE : Post-utopian culture and the aesthetics of survival

I

Enzensberger's had advocated the integration of literature as a 'Grenzfall' into the newer media in his optimistic essay on the strategic emancipation of the media. He had emphasised its materiality as a means of ridding it of the last vestiges of its aura, and had insisted on exploring its possibilities for encouraging dialogue between writer and readers. In the period after this essay, his work shows a sustained engagement with the role of literary texts in assisting in the creation of a more democratic society and in a reconsideration of the status of the author:

Ich sage nicht, daß der Autor überflüssig ist. Der ist immer noch notwendig. Ich halte den Schriftsteller für einen gesellschaftlichen Spezialisten, der die Aufgabe hat, die gesellschaftliche Realität zum Sprechen zu bringen.¹

The social necessity of the author might appear contradictory, given that Enzensberger had criticised so vehemently the activities of the critical intellectuals in the Federal Republic and their claims to a vanguard position in the struggles for political reform. However, he maintains that the author should work to allow society as a whole to speak:

[....] er ist zwar der Spezialist, der den Text herstellt, aber was er zum Sprechen bringt, ist nicht allein seine eigene Subjektivität, sondern in gewisser Weise sind ja alle Angehörigen in einer Gesellschaft Autoren [....]. Ich glaube nicht, daß es weiterhin möglich sein wird, sich zurückzuziehen immer nur auf die eigenen Probleme, auf die eigenen Geschichten, auf die eigenen Erfahrungen, sondern ich sehe den Schriftsteller vielmehr als den Interpreten, [....], sogar als den Bauchredner der anderen, denen durch die Arbeitsteilung [....] die Möglichkeit

¹ Enzensberger in Reinhold, 'Hans Magnus Enzensberger: Interview', p. 140.

genommen worden ist, sich auszudrücken.²

In several publications in the early 1970s Enzensberger puts his calls for new forms of writing into practice. Extensive use is made of documentary material, and generic distinctions are deliberately destabilised. These experiments are undertaken in order to find ways of reducing the monologic nature of literature and to allow the reader to become active, not least in drawing parallels between political scenarios represented in the texts and the political situation of the Federal Republic, with the fragmentation of the student movement.

Several books written or edited by Enzensberger draw on his skill at researching, editing and juxtaposing documents, interviews and speeches for political purposes. His notion of the writer as a specialist in textual practices can be seen in his collection, Freisprüche. Revolutionäre vor Gericht³, and through his interventions in the course of the book to provide textual notes, biographical details, bibliographies and commentaries. This publication attempts to link the activities of those charged with offences against the west German state at the end of the 1960s, with a long history of attempts by bourgeois states to use legal means to secure victory over revolutionary movements.

In the same year, Enzensberger published another book based on evidence given in judicial hearings, this time on the interrogations of suspected counterrevolutionaries in Havana in 1961.⁴ Enzensberger's script, initially aired as a radio play in 1969, was based on the transcripts of hearings which had been broadcast at the time live on both radio and television in Cuba.⁵ In his introduction, Enzensberger stressed that his

² Ibid.

³ Enzensberger, Freisprüche. Revolutionäre vor Gericht, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1970.

⁴ Enzensberger, Das Verhör von Habana. Szenische Dokumentation, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1970.

⁵ See Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 84.

selection of material was itself a political interpretation of events: the ensuing text, though neither a screenplay nor a play, could be recreated for television or in the theatre in Germany in order to draw out the contemporary relevance of the Cuban scenario for the Federal Republic.⁶ There were several attempts to produce the piece in the theatre, some of which also incorporated the use of television. WDR broadcast the premiere in Recklinghausen in 1970, a production which tried to avoid the passive consumption of the piece by inviting members of the audience on to the stage after each historical interrogation to answer questions about their own social situation. These contemporary 'interrogations' were then transmitted live in a procedure which paralleled the original events in 1961 to underscore Enzensberger's argument about the continuity of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary forces in recent history. The use of television was also a constituent element of the subsequent production in east Berlin in 1970. Television screens were used on stage to show documentary footage of the invasion and the whole piece was produced as the reconstruction of a television programme.⁷

Enzensberger's attempts to blur accepted literary conventions concerning authorship and genre were continued in the publication of his first 'Roman', a book depicting the life and death of the Spanish anarchist, Buenaventura Durruti.⁸ The publication grew out of research undertaken for a television film made for WDR and first broadcast in 1972. The events in Durruti's life are depicted through the incorporation of speeches, leaflets, reports and pamphlets, as well as memoirs and interviews with Durruti's

⁶ Enzensberger, 'Einleitung: Ein Selbstbildnis der Konterrevolution', Das Verhör von Habana, p. 54.

⁷ Although Enzensberger's work met with mixed reviews in the Federal Republic, this production was considered a great success in east Germany. See Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, pp. 86-88. The east Berlin production is discussed in Reinhold, 'Interview mit Hans Magnus Enzensberger', pp. 136-138. There were also subsequent television productions of the piece in Helsinki, Lisbon and Stockholm. See also Klaus L. Berghahn, 'Es genügt nicht die einfache Wahrheit: Hans Magnus Enzensbergers >Verhör von Habana< als Dokumentation und als Theaterstück', in Grimm (ed.), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, pp. 279-293.

⁸ Enzensberger, Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie. Buenventura Durrutis Leben und Tod, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1972.

contemporaries. The literary form used by Enzensberger, 'zwischen Nacherzählung und Rekonstruktion'⁹, attempts to foreground the difficulties of maintaining a schematic distinction between documentary evidence and fiction.¹⁰ The text is organised on the basis of chapters containing different accounts, often conflicting, of Durruti's actions, with commentaries by Enzensberger which give supplementary background information on historical or political questions. In the first commentary, instead of arguing that the use of documentary sources means that his book will provide an objective historical account of Durruti, he draws attention to his own role in shaping the narrative through his selection and editing of documents:

Der Nacherzähler hat weggelassen, übersetzt, geschnitten und montiert und in das Ensemble der Fiktionen, die er fand, seine eigene Fiktion eingebracht, mit voller Absicht und vielleicht auch wider Willen; nur daß diese eben darin ihr Recht hat, daß sie den andern das ihre läßt.¹¹

Labelling his version of Durruti's life a 'Roman' reinforces this. Not only does this call into question any necessary connection between documentary evidence and objectivity, it is also consistent with his argument that 'history' is a problematic category, best understood as a complex form of narrative. 'History', whether in the form of numerous anonymous stories, circulated in society by what he terms 'ein kollektiver Mund', or in the form of written records, documents and publications, is for Enzensberger simply a form of story, a 'kollektive Fiktion'. However, this collective fiction is grounded in the undisclosed interests of the narrators of history.¹²

⁹ See the publisher's notes introducing the text.

¹⁰ Enzensberger had already rejected the rigid separation of textual forms in his 1970 interview: 'Diese ganzen Kategorien von Fiktion und Nichtfiktion, von echt und unecht, von dokumentarisch und erfunden halte ich all für außerordentlich fragwürdig', in Reinhold, 'Hans Magnus Enzensberger: Interview', p. 141.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 15. See also Reinhold, 'Geschichtliche Konfrontation und poetische Produktivität', Tendenzen und Autoren, pp. 163-167.

¹² 'Die Geschichte ist eine Erfindung, zu der die Wirklichkeit ihre Materialien liefert. Aber sie ist keine beliebige Erfindung. Das Interesse, das sie erweckt, gründet auf den

Enzensberger tries to prove his point by juxtaposing conflicting accounts of specific events in Durruti's life. These accounts are often based on eyewitness testimonies or on similar apparently authentic and truthful statements. Their inconsistency reinforces his point that documentary evidence does not have any firmer grounds on which to base its claims to narrate the 'truth' than fictional writing, given that perspectives, desires and biographies inform all acts of narration. Furthermore, by providing 'Geschichten' about Durruti which do not add up to one single 'Geschichte', Enzensberger leaves the reader with the task of interpreting events: '(d)er Leser ist [...] der letzte, der diese Geschichte erzählt'.¹³ Hence in the act of narration or retelling, the reader is given an active role in the construction of historical meaning, in accord with Enzensberger's desire to move away from monologic forms of writing dominated by the author's perspective.¹⁴

The political activation of the reader was an aim explicit enough to be printed on the cover of Enzensberger's next project, the joint editorship of a three-volume Lesebuch, which provided texts charting the history of class struggle in Germany. The editors declared that their collection of texts, which included reports, songs, letters and pamphlets, dealt with the kinds of social conflict which had been erased from bourgeois literature and from material normally circulated in Lesebücher. In order to locate this hidden history and to utilise it, what was needed was 'ein anderer Begriff von

Interessen derer, die sie erzählen; und sie erlaubt es denen, die ihr zuhören, ihre eigenen Interessen, ebenso wie die ihrer Feinde, wiederzuerkennen und genauer zu bestimmen. Der wissenschaftlichen Recherche, die sich interesselos dünkt, verdanken wir vieles; doch sie bleibt Schlehmihl, eine Kunstfigur.' Enzensberger, Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie, p. 13.

¹³ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁴ Enzensberger's attempt in this book to experiment with a new literary form was not greeted with unanimous critical acclaim. However, Yaak Karsunke reviewed it favourably, seeing in it 'die Liquidation des bürgerlichen Romans, seines individuellen Helden und seines individuellen Autors'. Yaak Karsunke, 'Ein Film aus Worten. H. M. Enzensbergers Liquidation des bürgerlichen Romans', Frankfurter Rundschau, 30 September, 1972.

Geschichte und Literatur als der herrschende'.¹⁵ The books were intended to provide source material for teachers and, judging by the high sales figures, succeeded in providing alternative histories.¹⁶

Enzensberger's growing interest in biography continued in a study of historical attempts at political emancipation, Der Weg ins Freie.¹⁷ Although parts of this book were reworkings of pieces produced for the radio or published in Kursbuch, it is a continuation, if not culmination, of his use of documents and other non-fiction texts to produce new literary forms.¹⁸ What unites the five temporally and spatially distinct biographies is that the process of seeking liberation in each case provides the moments 'die ihn zum Subjekt der eigenen Lebensverhältnisse werden lassen'.¹⁹ As Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit note, this project emphasises Enzensberger's move from the search for a general political revolutionary theory to, by the mid-1970s, an interest in

¹⁵ Taken from the cover of Enzensberger et al. (eds), Klassenbuch 3. Ein Lesebuch zu den Klassenkämpfen in Deutschland 1920-1971, Sammlung Luchterhand, Darmstadt/Neuwied, 1972.

¹⁶ Sales had reached 25 000 by the end of the first year of publication. See Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 98. A similar goal lay behind Enzensberger's Gespräche mit Marx und Engels, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1973, which collected together in montage form a range of documents, from letters to the minutes of court hearings. Witnesses commented on their personal relationship to the two figures in a study of the lives behind the political theories.

¹⁷ Der Weg ins Freie. Fünf Lebensläufe. Überliefert von Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1975.

¹⁸ In a 'Nachbemerkung', he notes how the current vogue for Dokumentarliteratur in the Federal Republic has been theorised and formalised to the point at which it has 'in ihrer eigenen Sackgasse verharret', principally because of the obsessive claim of the documentarists that they achieved greater authenticity by using cameras or microphones. For Enzensberger, every attempt to use documents distorts the 'ursprüngliche Material' with a result that what is authentic is either every text or nothing, as 'das Recht zu reden schließt das Recht zu lügen ein'. Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁹ Reinhold, 'Hans Magnus Enzensberger: Interview', p. 163.

'den Widersprüchen, in der Gesellschaft wie im Bewußtsein des Subjekts'.²⁰

Many of the experiments undertaken by Enzensberger in his prose publications can also be found in Gedichte 1955-70. His first volume of poetry since his statements on the political irrelevance of fiction to the turbulent situation in Germany included several recent unpublished texts. Several poems raise questions about the consequences of political commitment and of the problems of utopian thinking which would become a major theme for Enzensberger later in the decade. Enzensberger includes documentary material and uses techniques of montage which correspond to his prose experiments. In 'Sommergedicht', quotations are juxtaposed from the disparate fields of literature (Wieland, Petrarch), political theory (Lenin, Marx, Mao Tse-Tung, Trotzky, Kruschew), and popular culture (Marilyn Monroe), with phrases taken from sources such as the Deutsche Bank A.G., as part of an interior dialogue carried out by an 'ich'-voice which is attempting to find inner security and certainties:

Ich habe soviel
tote Leute
gesehen
und doch ist noch nichts entschieden
in diesem Sommer
mitten im Ausverkauf
Erdbeeren
Umsätze
und dieser Geschmack
nach Verschwundenheit
ist überall
und nach Birkenlaub²¹

²⁰ See Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 101.

²¹ Enzensberger, 'Sommergedicht', Gedichte 1955-1970, p. 112.

The narrating voice never reaches inner stability, but this is not necessarily cause for disappointment. Although the poem ends self-referentially, indicating that all that has happened is that a poem emerges and then disappears, the narrator notes that despite the repeated cries for help, absolute certainties are, after all, undesired:

ein neuer Irrtum
ist mir lieber
als alle Gewißheiten²²

Documentary and montage techniques are in evidence in two other poems. In 'Vorschlag zur Strafrechtsreform', paragraphs from the Strafgesetzbuch are cut up and recomposed by Enzensberger to deliver in parody form a humorous but threatening picture of regulation and restriction in the Federal Republic:

wer den Gebrauch gewisser Beteuerungsformeln unterläßt
wer ohne Erlaubnis der zuständigen Behörde an Syphilis gelitten hat
wer auf einer Wasserstraße Gegenstände hinlegt
wer länger als drei volle Kalendertage abwesend ist
[....]
wer ein Zeichen der Hoheit beschädigt
wer sich dem Müßiggang hingibt
wer Einrichtungen beschimpft
wer seine Richtung ändern läßt²³

Although the punishment is undefined and always deferred, the catalogue of potential offences reaches a point at which each German subject must fall foul of the law. Even then the net of regulation is not complete, as '[d]as Nähere regelt die

²² Ibid., p.105.

²³ Ibid., pp.143-144.

Bundesregierung'.²⁴ The poetic use of documentary material, here in the form of legal statutes, is effective, turning the reader's attention directly to the extensive nature of the German penal code and to its use by the government for political purposes against radicals on the Left. Successful use of documentary material is made by Enzensberger in a second poem, 'Berliner Modell 1967', which again highlights the restrictive and authoritarian nature of German society. Enzensberger juxtaposes extracts from a text on industrial electronics in such a way as to make allusions to the political climate unmistakable:

Unsere Neuentwicklung ist ein universelles Bausteinsystem mit
verminderter Ausfallwahrscheinlichkeit.

[....]

Glücklicherweise braucht man bei dieser Technik weder auf
Toleranzen noch auf parasitäre Elemente Rücksicht zu nehmen.

[....]

Zur Unterdrückung innerer und äußerer Störer sind bei allen
Schaltkreis-Familien besondere Maßnahmen unerlässlich.

[....]

Zusammenfassend kann man sagen, daß die Störsicherheit
der Baureihe gegen innere Störungen besser ist als die der Vor-
gänger, und daß die äußeren Störer relativ sicher beherrscht
werden können.

Unsere Neuentwicklung ist völlig ausgereift und zukunftsicher.

Ein breiter Einsatz wird in den kommenden Jahren erwartet.²⁵

Enzensberger's attempts to utilise documentary material allow him to construct pieces which question the authority of the writer and which open up a space for the reader to participate in a dialogue about the nature of history, fact and fiction. These experiments

²⁴ Ibid., p. 145.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 146-147.

are intended to provoke the reader into drawing parallels between historical conflicts and the political situation in the Federal Republic at the end of the 1960s.

II

Enzensberger's two major volumes of poetry in the 1970s take his interest in the relationship between political conditions and cultural production into a new phase. The narrow historical focus on politics in contemporary Germany is widened in these works into a sustained interrogation of the nature of progress under capitalism in post-Enlightenment industrialised societies and of the dark side to utopian projects. There is a strand in Enzensberger's writing which even from the beginning of his career was dedicated to considering the nature of utopia and the possibility of its practical achievement. Utopian thinking plays a central part in Enzensberger's conception of both the project of poetry and of the goals and desires which lie behind the attractions of popular cultural practices for a wider public. What comes to the fore in the 1970s is a questioning of these impulses towards large-scale utopian projects. This is not a sign of political resignation on Enzensberger's part, as much as a radical shift in strategy. He continues his overall project, which can be characterised as one motivated by the need to create the political conditions under which a democratic culture can thrive.²⁶ However, his focus moves away from the institutional sites of political power, from direct criticism of the government and its repressive policies, and towards social structures or ways of thinking which promise forms of political or social liberation and yet which act to contribute to authoritarian tendencies in society.

²⁶ To maintain that there is an overall continuity of sorts means to stand against those critics who see in Enzensberger's work distinct and entirely separate phases, normally ended by acts of abandonment or even betrayal on the writer's part of his previously championed position. See, for example, Hans Egon Holthusen, 'Chorführer der neuen Aufklärung. Über den Lyriker Hans Magnus Enzensberger', *Merkur*, 1980, 9, pp. 896-912, and Dieter Steinbach, 'Hans Magnus Enzensberger – Zur Rezeption und Wirkung seines Werkes', *Text und Kritik*, 49, 1976, (1st edition), pp. 41-55.

It would be easy to overlook the significance of Enzensberger's critique of notions of historical progress. The political development of much of the radical Left in the Federal Republic over the 1970s follows to a large degree a path which becomes critical of the human and environmental costs of technological progress as part of a shift from Red to Green.²⁷ However, the timing of Enzensberger's publications and the nature of his analysis makes clear that in his work there is both an anticipation and also a radical critique of the Green movement's emerging 'political ecology'.²⁸ Enzensberger's critique of the history of technology parallels some theoretical strands of the emerging ecology movement, but it does not grow out of environmentalist concerns for the future sustainability of ecosystems or for the fairer utilisation of global resources. Rather, it should be seen as part of an inquiry into the philosophical thinking underpinning notions of progress and of the unfolding of history towards a utopian goal.

Enzensberger's project in Mausoleum²⁹ is primarily historiographical. The thirty-seven ballads, dedicated to a gallery of inventors, scientists and innovators from de Dondi in the fourteenth century to Che Guevara in recent years, construct a history of civilisation which is at the same time a document of moments of brutality and barbarism enacted on the less powerful in society. As Dietschreit has pointed out, the title of the collection is reminiscent of one of Enzensberger's much earlier projects, the Museum der modernen Poesie³⁰, which marks his engagement with the history of modern poetry. In the foreword to that volume, Enzensberger had written:

Das Museum ist eine Einrichtung, deren Sinn sich verdunkelt hat. Es gilt

²⁷ See Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorski, The German Left. Red, Green and Beyond, Polity, Cambridge, 1993, especially 99-106.

²⁸ See Enzensberger, 'Zur Kritik der politischen Ökologie', Kursbuch 33, 1973, pp. 1-42, reprinted in Enzensberger, Palaver. Politische Überlegungen (1967-1973), pp. 169-232.

²⁹ Enzensberger, Mausoleum. Siebenunddreißig Balladen aus der Geschichte des Fortschritts, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1975 (edition used, 1994).

³⁰ Museum der modernen Poesie. Eingerichtet von Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1960.

gemeinhin als Sehenswürdigkeit, nicht als Arbeitsplatz. Richtiger wäre es, das Museum als Annex zum Atelier zu denken; denn es soll Vergangenes nicht mumifizieren, sondern verwendbar machen, dem Zugriff der Kritik nicht entziehen, sondern aussetzen.³¹

Mausoleum follows this notion of museology with its invitation to the reader to reconsider what is normally narrated about the past centuries of civilisation. This collection of ballads forms a mausoleum which hardly honours the memory of the great inventors and scientists. Instead, it allows questions to be raised concerning the legacy of apparently civilising innovations and inventions, given the persistence of cruelty, exploitation and oppression in the contemporary world. The title refers not only, then, to the tomb within which reside the great inventors and scientists of the post-Enlightenment world but also, and crucially, it acts as a valediction or epitaph to an abandoned optimism concerning the possibility of social progress.

There are two important historiographical elements in Mausoleum which point towards a development in Enzensberger's cultural politics. First, to see the history of technology and progress in the western world as also the history of oppression, exploitation and cruelty implies the rejection of utopian and teleological currents within Left thinking, where the passage of history is viewed as unfolding by necessity towards an ultimately positive state. Second, Enzensberger constructs each ballad as a montage of biographical fragments, quotations, diary entries, letters and scientific treatises. As in the earlier documentary pieces, the conventional relationship between writer as creator and source of the text, and reader as passive literary consumer, is subverted. Enzensberger's position is that of the archivist who offers the reader access to different kinds of historical document. The reader is challenged to take on the role of an archaeologist of the written, looking at different historical layers of evidence in order to make connections and to draw conclusions about both the history of civilisation and about the way that histories are themselves constructed.

³¹ Quoted in Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 110.

This project has important antecedents in the work of both Benjamin and Foucault. Although writing out of very different philosophical traditions and at different historical moments, both theorists provide models of historiography which draw on the two elements identified in Mausoleum.³² For Benjamin, history should be seen as the result of a process of construction made from the present.³³ He is critical of the concept of progress, which he sees as linked to the failure to perceive the constructed, non-linear reality of the past.³⁴ Benjamin is insistent that the 'historical materialist' should examine the key cultural treasures which validate a society's self-understanding in order to reveal the horrors upon which it is based. The historical materialist's task is, famously, 'die Geschichte gegen den Strich zu bürsten':

Denn was er an Kulturgütern überblickt, das ist ihm samt und sonders von einer Abkunft, die er nicht ohne Grauen bedenken kann. Es dankt sein Dasein nicht nur der Mühe der großen Genien, die es geschaffen haben, sondern auch der namenlosen Fron ihrer Zeitgenossen. Es ist niemals ein Dokument der Kultur, ohne zugleich ein solches der Barbarei zu sein.³⁵

Foucault's essay, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', is similarly forceful in its rejection of both conventional historiography and of the linearity of historical development.³⁶ He adopts the Nietzschean term 'genealogy' to denote his radical historical method, which

³² Foucault and Benjamin are placed in close proximity as key figures in the formation of the post-Marxist critical practice, cultural materialism, by Scott Wilson in Cultural Materialism. Theory and Practice, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995. Wilson's concise comparison of Foucault and Benjamin on civilization and barbarism (op. cit. pp. 141-144) informs much of my subsequent analysis.

³³ Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften, pp. 251-261. On history as 'Gegenstand einer Konstruktion', see p. 258.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 254.

³⁶ Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in Paul Rabinow (ed), The Foucault Reader, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1991, pp. 76-100.

is close to the spirit of much of Mausoleum. For Foucault, genealogy is

gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times. [...] Genealogy does not oppose itself to history [...]; on the contrary, it rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for "origins".³⁷

The need for 'relentless erudition' and for 'a vast accumulation of source material' stipulated by Foucault are conditions met by many of Enzensberger's works in the 1970s, but particularly by the massive research which informs the textual quotations from which Mausoleum is constructed.³⁸ Enzensberger's Benjaminian notion of the history of civilisation as always at the same time the history of barbarism also corresponds to Foucault's genealogy of societal (non-)development:

Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity instills each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 76-77. Foucault is listed as a source for the ballad on Carl von Linné in Mausoleum, Index, p. 131. Moreover, Enzensberger applied the term 'Genealogie' to a series of short articles published in Konkret as early as 1961 which anticipate the general themes of Mausoleum concerning the recurring patterns of terror in history. See Enzensberger, 'Zur Genealogie des Terrors. Dialoge zur unbewältigten Vergangenheit', Konkret, 1961, 18, p. 6; 19, p. 6; 20, p. 8. Enzensberger also published Foucault's essay, 'Die Spuren des Wahnsinns', as early as 1965 in Kursbuch 3, 'Trugbilder und Wahnsinn'. Nevertheless, the Foucauldian slant to much of Enzensberger's later work has been noted only by Rolf Warnecke, 'Kurswechselfarade eines Intellektuellen - Konsequenz inkonsequent: Hans Magnus Enzensberger', Text und Kritik, 113, January 1992, pp. 101-04.

³⁸ The task of tracing Enzensberger's research and of pinning down his sources is more than enough to fill a doctoral thesis. See Kristin Schmidt, Poesie als Mausoleum der Geschichte. Zur Aufhebung der Geschichte in der Lyrik Hans Magnus Enzensbergers, which provides extensive information on sources used by Enzensberger, although in over 400 pages only 12 ballads are examined in detail.

domination to domination.³⁹

Barbarism is not, for Foucault, the opposite of civilisation, the state out of which the latter emerges; rather, the two are always intertwined, and, following Nietzsche, civilisations are always 'saturated in blood'.⁴⁰ For Benjamin, though the cultural treasures of civilisation also document the marks of violence and barbarism which accompany the conditions of their production, it is not possible to reject them in their entirety. They induce both a sense of horror and at the same time a kind of fascination. This dialectical process of attraction and repulsion marks out Enzensberger's technological and scientific histories in Mausoleum. Like Foucault and Benjamin, Enzensberger is aware of the prices that are paid at different moments of the civilising process: 'Die Spuren des Fortschritts sind blutig'.⁴¹ However, he is also clear that the unremittingly negative side of the history of progress cannot be fully understood without also considering the aura that technological innovations possess for a fascinated public. Although the proximity between the dynamics of technology and the public interest in the spectacle is noted in a number of ballads, one poem is devoted to the French magician, Robert-Houdin, whose biography brings the two drives so closely together. His performances combined successfully technological innovation with illusion, and stand in a metonymical relationship to the main themes of the book:

Ununterscheidbar

der Fortschritt des Schwindels vom Schwindel des Fortschritts.

Das Publikum taumelt, der Beifall will nicht mehr enden.⁴²

Fascination with the aura of technology blinds the public to the human costs of innovation. This is clearly demonstrated in the next ballad, dedicated to Isambard

³⁹ Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', p. 85.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Foucault refers here to Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morals, II, no. 6.

⁴¹ This line occurs in an earlier Enzensberger poem, 'zweifel', in blindenschrift, p. 37.

⁴² Enzensberger, Mausoleum, p. 81.

Kingdom Brunel, whose obsession with the spectacular nature of large-scale technology drives him to design increasingly enormous ships. His fascination with technology as spectacle aligns him with the members of the audience gathered to watch the launch of the Great Eastern, who quite literally fail to perceive the bloody nature of progress:

Die Dampfwinden heulen,
die Ketten rasseln, ein Seufzer, ein Geräusch wie ein endloser Trommelwirbel,
ein dumpfer Hall im eisernen Rumpf, ein Schrei, der Erdboden zittert,

das Schiff setzt sich in Bewegung. Ein irischer Tagelöhner
am Ankerspill, namens O'Donovan, wird von der Kurbel erfaßt, zerfetzt,
gen Himmel geschleudert. Sonderbar, wie langsam der Tote segelt
über die Köpfe der Menge hin! Er scheint zu schweben. Dreitausend
Neugierige, und niemand bemerkt ihn. Dann beginnt es zu regnen.⁴³

However, Mausoleum does not reject completely science and technology. What makes the history of progress so complicated and engaging, from Enzensberger's viewpoint, is that not all attempts to ameliorate the lot of humanity end in disaster. Although he is critical of large-scale utopian projects of the kind conducted by Campanella, Condorcet or even Che Guevara, several ballads display sympathy towards the central figure. This is most notable in the ballad dedicated to the pioneering campaign by the Hungarian doctor, Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis, whose efforts, in spite of the considerable opposition of the medical establishment, resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of deaths of women during childbirth.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 84-85.

⁴⁴ Enzensberger makes the dialectical nature of the relationship between technology, progress and disaster explicit in Der Untergang der Titanic. One of the ironic consequences of the Titanic disaster was the confirmation of the importance of radio technology and the subsequent development of echo-sounding devices in navigation, as Enzensberger states '.... im übrigen geht jede Innovation auf eine Katastrophe zurück', Der Untergang der Titanic, p. 34.

If the essays by Benjamin and Foucault belong to the theoretical antecedents for the historiographical method of Mausoleum, the histories of scientific and technological progress presented by Enzensberger bear a considerable affinity to the work of another historian, Siegfried Giedion.⁴⁵ Giedion had attempted to construct a history of technology to set alongside scholarly works in the history of science, despite the considerable difficulty in locating archival material. (No university librarian had thought it worthwhile to build up an archive of patent applications, sales catalogues or industrial designs.) The encyclopaedic results of Giedion's patient detective work are seen by Enzensberger as a major contribution to the 'Naturgeschichte der Technik',⁴⁶ and Giedion is compared to Norbert Elias and Benjamin, as 'ein Anthropologe, der uns lehrt, in den Eingeweiden unserer Zivilisation zu lesen.'⁴⁷ Although Giedion's name is not listed in the extensive index of sources at the end of Mausoleum, up to ten of Enzensberger's ballads are dedicated to prominent figures in his book, such as Oliver Evans and Frederick Winslow Taylor. Giedion's opus depicts the history of mechanisation as anonymous, in that only rarely can the development of technological processes be clearly linked with a single protagonist. Enzensberger's choice of the ballad form for his history of progress means that historical developments are continually traced back to the individual. This enables him to show in many poems that the heroic figure celebrated by subsequent generations nearly always has a dark, inhuman side. In revealing the discrepancy between the positive iconic status of the inventor as hero and the less pleasant biographical details, Enzensberger encourages the reader to question conventional historiography concerning technological advances. Any

⁴⁵ Giedion's pioneering 1948 study, Mechanization takes command: a contribution to anonymous history, was only able to find a publisher in England and the USA, its subject matter seemingly too speculative for publication in its author's native language, German. According to Enzensberger's review of the German edition, Die Herrschaft der Mechanisierung, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt am Main, 1983, it took 34 years for the work to be translated back into German. See Enzensberger, 'Unheimliche Fortschritte', Der Spiegel, 37, 1983, pp. 196-207.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 199. Enzensberger also compares Giedion's project with Diderot's Encyclopedia, *ibid.*, p. 196.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 201.

preconceptions the reader may have of the necessary connections between technological innovation and social progress are undermined by the cumulative weight of contradictory archival evidence. Furthermore, Enzensberger's focus on individual inventors and pioneers enables him to explore the personal costs paid by the individual in the often misguided attempts to further the public good.⁴⁸

However, Giedion's wide-ranging social history of technology ignores those areas which Enzensberger's overall cultural project so centrally addresses.⁴⁹ There are several ballads in Mausoleum which examine the theme of the industrialisation of consciousness, most importantly those dedicated to Gutenberg, the inventor of the printing press, and to the pioneering film maker, Georges Méliès. There are also related ballads on Piranesi and Chopin, which incorporate discussions of the artist as inventor into the collection. The ballad on Gutenberg immediately draws attention to the fact that the reader of Mausoleum is reaping the benefits of print technology in the act of reading about the invention of the printing press.⁵⁰ The reader and the author of the volume are, then, not set apart from these histories of technology but are fully implicated in them. Printing, one of the key factors in the emergence of literature as a

⁴⁸ Enzensberger confirms that this was one of his intentions in a letter quoted in Schmidt, Poesie als Mausoleum der Geschichte, pp. 379-380. The relationship between the individual creator and the personal price of the act of creation is also a major strand in the semi-autobiographical poem, Der Untergang der Titanic. Eine Komödie, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1978, which in many ways acts as a companion piece to Mausoleum.

⁴⁹ 'Der auffälligste Mangel seines Buches ist, daß die Industrialisierung des Bewußtseins fehlt. Weder die Drucktechnik noch der Film, weder das Telephon noch die Rechenmaschine kommen darin vor', *ibid.* Enzensberger makes good Giedion's blind spots concerning technologies of calculation and computing, which he insists are central to a history of technology. A set of ballads examines the legacy of various mathematicians, including Condorcet, Malthus, Babbage and Alan Turing, whose pioneering work in the field of 'intelligent' machines contributed to the foundations of computer science and artificial intelligence. Enzensberger's unusual interest in mathematics and computing can be traced across a number of other poems, including 'Hommage à Gödel', Gedichte 1955-70, pp. 168-69, and 'Ein Hase im Rechenzentrum', in Zukunftsmusik, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1991, pp. 91-92.

⁵⁰ Enzensberger, Mausoleum, p. 10.

written art form and consequently of literary cultures, is shown to have its technological roots in the 'Quattrocento', a period in which, Enzensberger notes, progress was also made in mining, milling and, more ominously, in weaponry. The forms of communication made possible by the printing press also lend themselves to a kind of anonymity, an impersonality. The author is able to 'disappear', literally in that the text can survive the author's death, but also metaphorically in that the text circulates beyond the immediate control of its author. This 'death' of the author is prefigured in the legacy of Gutenberg, whose own (technological) creation survives him:

In einem Dunst aus heißem Metall

ist er verschwunden. Dies hier, das Schwarze
auf dem weißen Papier, blieb zurück:

Die Kunst des künstlichen Schreibens,
ein bleierner Nachgeschmack aus dem Quattrocento.⁵¹

The liberation of the reader, which accompanies the 'death' of the author and the emancipation from authority, finds confirmation in the ballad on Piranesi.⁵² With its appeal to the reader to determine the meaning of Piranesi's complex engravings - 'Entscheide nun selbst, Leser' - it makes repeated comments about the limits of the judgement of the critic. The structure of the ballad, with its six overlapping sections, parallels the complexity of Piranesi's own work. Enzensberger stresses the impossibility of fixing a stable meaning to certain aesthetic creations:

Du irrst dich in diesen Stichen. Auf die Strahlen und Schatten mußt du achten.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 11.

⁵² Enzensberger had previously written a poem on the Carceri d'invenzione, published in blindenschrift, pp. 26-27. See also the articles, Per Ohrgaard, 'Carceri d'invenzione', Text und Kontext, 1978, 1/2, pp. 416-428, and W. S. Sewell, '"dunkel hell dunkel"', Enzensberger's two Piranesi poems', in Festschrift for E.W.Herd, Dunedin, 1980, pp. 238-250. Kristin Schmidt analyses this ballad at length in Poesie als Mausoleum der Geschichte, pp. 165-205.

sie kündigen etwas anderes an. Erkennst du denn nicht, daß dieser Raum zwar geschlossen, aber unendlich ist? Das Labyrinth, das er abbildet, ist dein Bewußtsein. Deshalb schwindelt dir; denn du blickst in dein eignes Gehirn; doch was das Gehirn, und was das Bewußtsein ist, das wissen wir nicht.⁵³

Many of the themes considered in this section, such as technology and spectacle, consciousness and industrialisation, the disappearance of the artist and, not least, history as an invention, intersect in the ballad on Georges Méliès, the early French film director. Motivated by the desire to entertain the public and to be considered an innovator, as Paris grows bored with his illusions and magic projects, he begins to experiment with film, developing many of the techniques which the cinema now takes for granted:

Er hat alles erfunden. Den Stoptrick. Die Dunkelblende. Das Drehbuch.
Die Doppelbelichtung. Den Phasentrick. Die Überblendung. Das Studio
Das Meer seiner Erfindungen schlägt über ihm zusammen, phosphoreszierend
schwarz-weiß.⁵⁴

The invention of film is shown to change the nature of the relationship of society to catastrophe and also to history in its wider forms. In anticipation of his longer examination of the sinking of the Titanic as a media event in Der Untergang der Titanic, Enzensberger notes the changed nature of disaster experienced henceforth as technological spectacle:

Alle Desaster des Fortschritts jagen vorüber als Albtraum, als Slapstick,

⁵³ Enzensberger, Mausoleum, p. 43. As Schmidt notes, the aims of Enzensberger's Piranesi ballad coincide with those of the engravings by Piranesi: 'Beide Kunstwerke fordern die Wahrnehmungsfähigkeit ihres Publikums heraus', Poesie als Mausoleum der Geschichte, p. 171.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 113-14.

als Féerie. Der Meister klatscht in die Hände. Jetzt wird es hell.⁵⁵

The public understanding of history changes, too, with this new technology. History can be recreated, remade and relived, this time as film:

Der Produzent stellt die Geschichte im Studio nach. Alles viel besser,
Schöner, Genauer und Echter als in Wirklichkeit!⁵⁶

This repeats Enzensberger's view that the nature of history changed after the invention of film as the public were able to witness their own histories on the screen and see how they could be constructed and manufactured.⁵⁷ The technologies of the media, particularly of film, are useful in that they reveal to the audience their own historical position. However, the cultural optimism regarding the democratic implications of technology emphasised in Enzensberger's 'Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien', is hardly reflected in the volume as a whole. Although the ballads encompass some 600 years of human inventiveness, the moments which offer hope are few. Many innovators are depicted as selfish, inhumane and tyrannical exploiters of the weak. The description of Tycho Brahe typifies Enzensberger's antipathy towards them:

dieses Raubtier: den Grandseigneur, der mit dreizehn die Achseln zuckt
über Rebhühner, Windhunde, Fuchsjagden; wendet seiner Klasse den Rücken
und die Augen der Sonne zu, die sich verfinstert.

[...] Wissen
um jeden Preis.
[...]

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 113.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 114.

⁵⁷ Enzensberger, 'Baukasten', p. 103.

Es sind die andern, die hungern!⁵⁸

The poor, hungry and powerless are seen as the victims of the history of 'progress'. Haussmann's plans for modernising Paris leave the masses homeless and at the mercy of speculators and enable a more effective policing of the urban environment. Stanley's civilising expeditions leave in their wake '[D]er Gestank der Leichen'⁵⁹, while the victim's body becomes, in an all-too-literal sense, the site of technological experiment in the appalling ballad of the Italian psychiatrist, Cerletti.

Enzensberger certainly abandons any notion of the necessary unfolding of history towards a positive goal in Mausoleum. His anti-teleological historiography makes clear that each ballad defines an historical moment which is caught up in a dialectic of innovation and exploitation, echoing Foucault's assertion that humanity proceeds from domination to domination. These historical circumstances define just as surely the present day, according to Enzensberger. This is emphasized in the opening and closing ballads, separated by over six hundred years of technological progress. In the opening ballad, dedicated to the Italian clockmaker, de'Dondi, the reader is told

Nicht Guggenheim sandte
Francesco Petracca Schecks
zum ersten des Monats.
De'Dondi hatte keinen Kontrakt
mit dem Pentagon.

Andere Raubtiere. Andere
Wörter und Räder. Aber
derselbe Himmel.
In diesem Mittelalter

⁵⁸ Enzensberger, Mausoleum, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

leben wir immer noch.⁶⁰

The last ballad is dedicated to Che Guevara, an inspirational figure to the student movements in western countries, particularly in the Federal Republic, in the fight for political liberation and democracy. His place in the mausoleum of failed attempts to improve society not only signals the closure of the recent near-revolutionary moment in the west, but underlines, for Enzensberger, the impossibility of any wholesale historical change for the better. The Guevara ballad, and indeed the whole collection, ends with Enzensberger's implication that this mausoleum is part of the historical present, not just part of society's vain attempts at progress in the past. It will be extended as future utopian moments turn sour:

Der Text bricht ab, und ruhig rotten die Antworten fort.⁶¹

Technology and mechanisation are shown in Mausoleum to increase rather than to alleviate the suffering of the powerless. In those ballads which relate to the mechanisation of the labour process, the area where the implications of technology are felt by many most directly, technological innovation comes at a high cost to the worker and benefits the economically powerful. In the ballad on Taylor, pioneer of factory techniques, the reader learns that 'Die Ausbeutung der Wissenschaft wird zur Wissenschaft der Ausbeutung'⁶², while in the case of Oliver Evans, the American inventor of industrial methods of milling, new technology comes at the price of human alienation:

Dann erscheint der Erfinder und errichtet eine Mühle, aus der die Müller
verschwunden sind. In dem menschenleeren Gebäude regen sich nur die
Becherwerke, die Aufzüge, Zubringer, Mehlschrauben [...]

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 128.

⁶² Ibid., p. 111.

Eine Mühle, aber kein Müller mehr.⁶³

Schmidt reads this ballad as indicative of Enzensberger's historical pessimism: in the course of history, the mill is what ultimately remains, the machine survives the miller:

Die Mechanisierung ist selbst eine Maschine, deren Bestandteile, die technischen Inventionen, miteinander verzahnt sind. Das Ineinandergreifen der Erfindungen des Menschen bedeutet ihre historische Folgerichtigkeit. Am Ende der Entwicklung steht das Ende der Geschichte.⁶⁴

There is much evidence to support this analysis, given the cumulative weight of ballads which show how suffering endures despite the continual process of invention. The various utopian attempts to construct new societies where suffering might be banished systematically, as in the line of ballads connecting Campanella, Condorcet, Fourier and Guevara, are shown to be futile. They regress as easily into authoritarian and oppressive regimes as the cynical projects of Machiavelli.

Schmidt's reading of Mausoleum concurs with the analysis made by Ursula Reinhold, who notes a constant 'Zug zum geschichtsphilosophischen Pessimismus'⁶⁵, while Michael Linstead and Hans-Christian Oeser find in the collection 'a pessimism about any progress or advance within history'.⁶⁶ There are, however, aspects in the ballads which hint at strategies of escape from the cyclical nature of history as it moves from one epoch of oppression to another, and which are the initial signs of the positive, cheerful, populist nature of Enzensberger's writing over much of the 1980s.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 59.

⁶⁴ Schmidt, Poesie als Mausoleum der Geschichte, p. 368.

⁶⁵ Reinhold, 'Geschichtliche Konfrontation und poetische Produktivität', p. 167.

⁶⁶ Michael Linstead and Hans-Christian Oeser, "'Sauwetter' & 'Eskapismus': Social Critique of a Non-Committal Poet in H. M. Enzensberger's Furie des Verschwindens", Occasional Papers in German Studies No. 10, University of Warwick, 1986, p.19.

Enzensberger, it should be remembered, is a writer who on numerous occasions has sought to stress the anti-totalising aspects of his work. Despite the manipulative nature of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', he continually rejected claims that it was a total system, seeing it as 'lückenhaft'.⁶⁷ His interest in mathematicians lies particularly in those theorists who subvert theories of totality, such as Gödel with his Incompleteness Theorem. Although the history of progress seems unredeemingly pessimistic, it would be unusual in Enzensberger's work if it were depicted as a totality with no gaps or spaces or sites for contestation. Reading Mausoleum carefully, it can be seen that, despite everything, there are glimpses of action 'against the grain' which allow for a guarded optimism. These positive signs can be seen in Enzensberger's attraction to the Russian anarchist, Bakunin⁶⁸, and, less obviously, to the outsiders who symbolise a quiet and enduring resistance to the technologies of power. The appeals to Bakunin, to 'kehr wieder, kehr wieder, kehr wieder', are certainly ambivalent, yet Bakunin's assistance is not sought because of the practical success of any of his projects, but because he cannot be absorbed easily into the fabric of historical development:

Immer dasselbe. Natürlich hast du gestört.
Kein Wunder! Und du störst heute noch. Verstehst du? Du störst
ganz einfach. Und darum bitte ich dich, Bakunin: kehr wieder.⁶⁹

What attracts Enzensberger to Bakunin, more so than to any other individual figure in the collection, is that his political ideas, and his actual behaviour, make him an impossible role model. His value is a negative one: he cannot be coopted in the name of a grand social plan or telos. His name cannot be lent to any utopian programme which would, like all other systems in Mausoleum, turn into authoritarianism and oppression. If Mausoleum has an heroic figure, and the relationship in the ballad between

⁶⁷ See Enzensberger, 'Baukasten', pp. 94-97.

⁶⁸ Bakunin is discussed also in Enzensberger, Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie, pp. 272-73.

⁶⁹ Enzensberger, Mausoleum, p. 94.

Enzensberger and Bakunin is anything but hagiographical, then the bizarre, anarchic figure of Bakunin comes closest, praised for his irreducible individualism:

Weil du, mit einem Wort, unfähig bist, Bakunin, weil du nicht taugst
zum Abziehbild zum Erlöser zum Bürokraten zum Kirchenvater
zum rechten oder zum linken Bullen, Bakunin: kehr wieder, kehr wieder!⁷⁰

If the only positive person in the history of progress is Bakunin, then Enzensberger is left at an apparent dead end. His genealogy of progress has thrown up very little in the way of answers as to how to achieve change in the present moment. Here it is fruitful to return to Benjamin, whose project of 'historical materialism' advocated the historian making repeated connections between the past and the present in order to set out strategies for resisting oppression. It is the task of the historical materialist in the archive 'im Vergangenen den Funken der Hoffnung anzufachen' by learning from the past in moments of danger:

Vergangenes historisch artikulieren heißt nicht, es erkennen 'wie es denn eigentlich gewesen ist'. Es heißt, sich einer Erinnerung bemächtigen, wie sie im Augenblick einer Gefahr aufblitzt.⁷¹

Superficially, Enzensberger appears to be leading the reader into the archive of the history of progress, of making available documents and fragments which urge the reader to question assumptions about the path of history towards increasing civilisation, and then at the vital moment, the exact moment of danger in Benjamin's terms in regard to the 1970s and the aftermath of the student movement, of failing to provide any attempt to fan the flames of hope in the possibility of change, in strategies to undermine authoritarianism and oppression. And yet, in the figure of Bakunin, in the worms which

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 95.

⁷¹ Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', p. 253.

outlive Darwin and turn the earth into humus 'tonnenweise, lautlos und unaufhaltsam'⁷², and in the figures of the hippies in the shop named after Guevara who persist 'unwirklich, wie Fossile, und fraglos, und fast unsterblich'⁷³, there are glimpses of outsiders, marginal figures, out of the spotlight, who have found ways of surviving. These strategies of survival, albeit small, piecemeal and at the margins of society, seem to hold more chance of success than the larger dreams of planning and building utopias.

IV

Enzensberger's second major verse publication in the 1970s, Der Untergang der Titanic, continues this critique of utopian thinking, but the general pessimism of Mausoleum is replaced by a more ironic, cheerful stance. Enzensberger suggests several positive strategies to counter barbarism, disillusion and repression, in ordinary life and in the pleasures of creation, especially in those pleasures which involve games of hide and seek, of outwitting the critics, experts and scientists.

The title anticipates a continuation of the interrogation of faith in historical progress and in the positive potential of technological innovation undertaken in Mausoleum. The sinking of the Titanic on her maiden voyage in 1912 shocked the world not only because of the heavy losses of life involved but also because of the way that the widely-held belief in the ability of society to overcome the threatening forces of nature was shattered. Thus, the sinking of the Titanic, the 'unsinkable' ship, has come to represent the foundering of modern society, the liner figuring as a microcosm of society's precarious commitment to technological advance.

The Titanic has already become an icon in twentieth century representations, particularly in film, song and other forms of popular culture.⁷⁴ Its hold on the 'social imaginary', as Slavoj Žižek has noted, is enduring and has become so knotted with

⁷² Enzensberger, Mausoleum, p. 89.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 128.

⁷⁴ See Richard Howells, 'And the band played on ...', The Higher, April 24, 1992, p. 17.

meanings that its significance is largely overdetermined.⁷⁵ The actual catastrophe of the Titanic in 1912 is examined in Enzensberger's 'Komödie' using quotations from popular songs, eye-witness reports, documents and even from an earlier, lost, poem by Enzensberger himself.⁷⁶ However, the 33 cantos and 16 supplementary poems are as much an investigation into the way the sinking of the Titanic and the related fears of catastrophe and apocalypse function today in contemporary society, saturated with media information, as important myths. Enzensberger draws attention to the multiplicity of meanings the sinking of the Titanic has for us in his 16th Canto, positioned almost exactly halfway through the volume:

Der Untergang der Titanic ist aktenkundig.

Er ist etwas für Dichter.

Er garantiert eine hohe steuerliche Verlustzuweisung.

Er ist ein weiterer Beweis für die Richtigkeit der Thesen Vladimir Ilič Lenins.

Er läuft im Fernsehen gleich nach der Sportschau.

[....]

Er ist besser als gar nichts.

Er hat am Montag Ruhetag.

Er ist umweltfreundlich.

Er öffnet den Weg in eine bessere Zukunft.

Er ist Kunst.

Er schafft Arbeitsplätze.

Er geht uns allmählich auf die Nerven.

[....]

⁷⁵ See 'The Titanic as symptom', in Slavoj Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, Verso, London, 1992, pp. 69-71. Žižek notes how the impact of the sinking was immense because it was somehow expected and had been foretold in popular literary tales. Žižek argues that the Zeitgeist proposed that a certain age was coming to an end and the sinking of the Titanic was seized upon as symbolic proof.

⁷⁶ A useful account of Enzensberger's sources can be found in Christian Bachler, 'Der Untergang der Titanic. Eine Komödie' von Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Eine Motiv- und Strukturanalyse, Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, 1992, (unpublished dissertation).

Er ist auch nicht mehr das, was er einmal war.⁷⁷

The multiple meanings connected with the sinking of the Titanic, and their contemporary significance, form the subject matter of Enzensberger's complex, multi-layered work. It becomes much more than the reheating of an old story about faith in progress and the revenge of nature, although these elements still feature in the book. What interests Enzensberger is how these different meanings function alongside each other and why, given the overdetermination of significance, the sinking of the Titanic retains an apocalyptic dimension in the popular imagination. As the Beizettel accompanying the volume makes clear, the sinking of the Titanic is an event which belongs not just to the past, but also to the present:

Als Geisterschiff ist die Titanic immer noch unterwegs. Wie gegenwärtig sie ist, das zeigt sich daran, daß ihr Los sich heute noch widerspiegelt in Filmen und Alpträumen, in allen Medien der Phantasie. Enzensbergers Gedicht hat es nicht zuletzt mit dieser imaginären Titanic zu tun, mit dem 'Untergang im Kopf'.⁷⁸

The voyages of the Titanic in the social imaginary allow Enzensberger to explore at a much more complex level the workings of the ever-present myth of impending catastrophe, an investigation which is related to his interrogation of the history of progress carried out in Mausoleum. If Mausoleum pointed out that the history of progress can be read as different moments in a transhistorical structure of technologies and oppressions, the continual presence of the Titanic can be seen as the other side of the eternal faith in progress, namely the faith in impending apocalypse. However, where the work on the Titanic is an advance on the 'history' of progress carried out in Mausoleum is precisely in the importance Enzensberger attaches in the later piece to the social commitment to myth. Although Mausoleum argued convincingly against optimism regarding historical progress, it did not attempt to explore fully the persistent

⁷⁷ Enzensberger, Der Untergang der Titanic, p. 55.

⁷⁸ Beizettel accompanying Der Untergang der Titanic.

individual and societal faith in progress that transcends different historical moments. It did not attempt to investigate the desires and motivations that underlie such a commitment to the utopian unfolding of history.

In an essay published in Kursbuch in the year that Der Untergang der Titanic appeared, Enzensberger connects the fear of the apocalypse with the desire for utopia, arguing that 'die Vorstellung vom Weltuntergang ist nichts anderes als eine negative Utopie'.⁷⁹ Despite its comparative brevity, the 'Zwei Randbemerkungen zum Weltuntergang' is one of the most important statements by Enzensberger of his position regarding Marxism and utopian thinking. In his first 'Randbemerkung', Enzenberger sets out to show how apocalyptic thinking, despite the new impetus given to it in contemporary society by, among others, the emerging ecology movement in the Federal Republic, is by no means a recent phenomenon. He does not ridicule the persistence of apocalyptic thinking as typified in the enduring resonance of the Titanic disaster, but notes instead how the apocalypse belongs to and is produced by a range of different discourses, how it is overdetermined with meaning given its multitude of social positions and functions:

Die Apokalypse gehört zu unserem ideologischen Handgepäck. Sie ist ein Aphrodisiakum. Sie ist ein Angsttraum. Sie ist eine Ware wie jede andere. Sie ist, meinetwegen, eine Metapher für den Zusammenbruch des Kapitalismus, der bekanntlich seit über hundert Jahren unmittelbar bevorsteht. Sie tritt uns in allen möglichen Gestalten und Verkleidungen entgegen, als warnender Zeigefinger und als wissenschaftliche Prognose, als kollektive Fiktion und als sektiererischer Weckruf, als Produkt der Unterhaltungsindustrie, als Aberglauben, als Trivialmythos, als Vexierbild, als Kick, als Jux, als Projektion. Sie ist allgegenwärtig, aber nicht 'wirklich': eine zweite Realität, ein Bild, das wir uns machen, eine unaufhörliche Produktion unserer Phantasie, die Katastrophe im Kopf.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Enzensberger, 'Zwei Randbemerkungen zum Weltuntergang', Politische Brosamen, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1985, p. 225. First printed in Kursbuch, 52, 1978, pp. 1-18.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 225.

Enzensberger argues that although the idea of the apocalypse has always been part of the social unconscious, in contemporary society it has lost its previous, theological, nature and has formed itself around more secular concerns, depicted here in imagery borrowed from the discourses of advertising and popular culture:

Unser siebenköpfiges Ungeheuer hört auf viele Namen: Polizeistaat, Paranoia, Bürokratie, Terror, Wirtschaftskrise, Rüstungswahn, Umweltvernichtung; die vier Reiter sehen aus wie Westernhelden und verkaufen Zigaretten, und die Posaunen, die den Weltuntergang ankündigen, dienen einem Werbespot als Begleitmusik.⁸¹

The apocalypse seems to be inevitable, but for the German public, compared in this essay to the audience at an early silent film, it is happening in slow motion, viewed from comfortable seats and consumed with a portion of popcorn. Whatever disaster society is heading towards, it will not affect everyone in equal measure, as envisaged in the theological versions of the apocalypse:

Er ist von Land zu Land, von Klasse zu Klasse, von Ort zu Ort verschieden; während er die einen ereilt, betrachten die andern ihn auf dem Fernsehschirm.⁸²

In his second 'Randbemerkung', Enzensberger moves from this analysis of apocalyptic thinking to a consideration of its implications for utopian politics in general. This short piece is highly significant for Enzensberger's future cultural-political position as it signals his distance from much of the theoretical heritage of the Left. It sets out his commitment to a newer, undogmatic, political agnosticism. His statements follow from the connection he makes between the Left and its commitment to utopian projects:

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 226.

⁸² Ibid., p. 228.

Die Stärke der linken Theorie, gleich welcher Prägung, hat von Babeuf bis Bloch, also mehr als anderthalb Jahrhunderte lang, darin gelegen, daß sie auf einer positiven Utopie beruhte, der die Welt nichts Ebenbürtiges entgegenzusetzen hatte.⁸³

Part of the strength and attraction of this body of theory, according to Enzensberger, was its claim to be able to understand the course of history and to anticipate a more humane future. Much of this argument echoes Enzensberger's archaeology of progress in the volume Mausoleum. Enzensberger's rejection of this teleological movement of history, a theory which has its philosophical foundations firmly in the work of Hegel and then Marx, is emphatically confirmed in this essay:

Statt dessen weigern sich unsere Theoretiker, gefesselt an die philosophischen Traditionen des deutschen Idealismus, bis heute, zuzugeben, was jeder Passant längst verstanden hat: daß es keinen Weltgeist gibt; daß wir die Gesetze der Geschichte nicht kennen; daß auch der Klassenkampf ein 'naturwüchsiger' Prozeß ist, den keine Avantgarde bewußt planen und leiten kann; daß die gesellschaftliche wie die natürliche Evolution kein Subjekt kennt und daß sie deshalb unvorhersehbar ist; daß wir mithin, wenn wir politisch handeln, nie das erreichen, was wir uns vorgesetzt haben, sondern etwas ganz anderes, das wir uns nicht einmal vorzustellen vermögen; und daß die Krise aller positiven Utopien eben hierin ihren Grund hat.⁸⁴

This statement has important implications for Enzensberger's cultural politics. His rejection of teleological philosophies of history in their Hegelian and Marxist forms distances him from much of the cultural project of the left, from the Frankfurt School to Brecht. Moreover, this rejection includes the notion that the path of history has a clear subject, whether the working class, in Marxist terms, or the more abstract unfolding of

⁸³ Ibid., p. 229.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 234-35.

the 'Weltgeist' in those of Hegel.⁸⁵ These claims have important implications for Enzensberger's cultural production. He rules out the possibility of an effective artistic avant-garde which can anticipate and guide revolutionary activity. This is not to argue that Enzensberger ceases to make any political claims for his work. The complexities of the Titanic poem and the difficulties of interpretation are evidence that the politics of the aesthetic lie precisely in the promotion of unpoliced and unregulated pleasures. As his statement suggests, and the autobiographical elements in Der Untergang der Titanic confirm, political action never turns out as hoped: one never achieves exactly what one sets out to. This statement should not be read as simply revealing Enzensberger's resignation at the failure of the political activities engaged in during the 1960s. His essay criticises the turn by some on the German left away from utopianism and towards negative utopias, to irrationalism, resignation and defeatism. For Enzensberger, given the unknowability of the future, the terms 'optimism' and 'pessimism' are inadequate, merely 'Heftpflaster für Leitartikler und Wahrsager'.⁸⁶ Neither should his statement be understood as advocating the abandonment of analysis and critical thinking. Enzensberger's single desire, namely 'daß wir ohne Ärmelschöner denken'⁸⁷, is echoed in his wishes for clarity and modesty rather than fear and confusion in the face of uncertainty. This is a provisional but nonetheless positive politics, a point from which the present can be survived and the future negotiated, summed up in his final phrase, 'dann werden wir weitersehen'.⁸⁸

Strategies for surviving the loss of utopias are a major element in Der Untergang der Titanic. There is a semi-autobiographical thread in many cantos which parallels the events in Enzensberger's life between his long stay in Cuba in 1968 and 1969 and his

⁸⁵ Enzensberger's antipathy to philosophical claims to absolute knowledge, whether concerning the course of history or not, is evidenced in the poem, 'Fachschaft Philosophie', in Der Untergang der Titanic, p. 93, in which, by pencilling in a moustache, Hegel quickly begins to resemble Stalin.

⁸⁶ Enzensberger, 'Zwei Randbemerkungen zum Weltuntergang', pp. 235-36.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 229.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 236.

subsequent return to Berlin. In several early cantos, the narrator, writing from Berlin in 1977, the moment of the gloomy 'deutscher Herbst' when the state and its antagonists in the Rote Armee Fraktion seemed locked in a hopeless political struggle, attempts to piece together recollections of his time in Cuba in 1969 and fragments of a poem, Der Untergang der Titanic, which he had begun there. The reader is led to believe that in this early version of the Titanic poem, written in the middle of revolutionary euphoria, the old capitalist class-based society (symbolised by the liner) is about to hit the revolutionary socialist iceberg. However, this utopian version of the poem never appeared. The later 'Komödie' written in Berlin claims in its text to be a reconstruction of the earlier version, which itself went missing (or sank!) in a mailbag on route to Paris.⁸⁹ What does surface, though, is the Berlin model of Der Untergang der Titanic, written in 1977, which, with the benefit of hindsight, is able to look back at a revolutionary experience just before it would turn sour. The narrator notes how, although no one was thinking at the time of any kind of 'Untergang', the hopes for a utopian future were in vain:

Es schien uns, als stünde etwas bevor,
etwas von uns zu Erfindendes.
Wir wußten nicht, daß das Fest längst zu Ende,
und alles Übrige eine Sache war
für die Abteilungsleiter der Weltbank
und die Genossen von der Staatssicherheit,
genau wie bei uns und überall sonst auch.⁹⁰

What is so striking about the actual text of Der Untergang der Titanic is the way in which, as Moray MacGowan notes, the conventional symbolic properties of the iceberg

⁸⁹ Given the complexities of this poem and the recurring theme of art as concealment and falsification, it would be no surprise if the references to an earlier "verschollenes" manuscript were another deliberate ruse by the author. See Bachler, 'Der Untergang der Titanic', pp. 90-92.

⁹⁰ Enzensberger, Der Untergang der Titanic, p. 15.

and the liner are reversed.⁹¹ In fact, the euphoric conversations in Cuba about revolution mirror the self-absorption of the passengers on the Titanic, heading blindly towards the iceberg which will puncture their vanities. The iceberg here figures as a symbol for the jagged forces of history on which all utopian plans, as Mausoleum argues, run aground. If the experience in Cuba reveals to the narrator the futility of utopian politics, what follows is not complete resignation in the face of history, but an evaluation of the implications of this position. Der Untergang der Titanic explores the repercussions of the end of utopian hopes in political terms and also in the consequences it has for cultural production. Importantly, the loss of faith in utopias is not necessarily the end of the narrator's world but a perspective from which he can explore the various ways that that loss is survived. This is not to trivialise the sense of loss. The supplementary poem 'Verlustanzeige' provides a list of the ways that the verb 'verlieren' can operate in German. Despite the formal semantic nature of the poem's repetitions, this is a forceful enactment of how much in life will ultimately be lost and how this realisation has to be accommodated for life to go on:

Die Haare verlieren, die Nerven,
 versteht ihr, die kostbare Zeit,
 auf verlorenem Posten an Höhe
 verlieren, an Glanz, ich bedaure
 [...]
 den Verstand, den letzten Heller,
 sei's drum, gleich bin ich fertig,
 die Fassung, Hopfen und Malz,
 alles auf einmal verlieren,
 wehe, sogar den Faden,
 den Führerschein, und die Lust.⁹²

⁹¹ See Moray MacGowan, "'Das Dinner geht weiter': Some reflections on Enzensberger and cultural pessimism", in Hinrich Siefkin and J.H. Reid (eds), Lektüre - ein anarchistischer Akt, University of Nottingham Monographs in the Humanities: VI, Nottingham, 1990, p. 14.

⁹² Enzensberger, Der Untergang der Titanic, pp. 18-19.

One way of coming to terms with the process of inevitable, routine loss is to pin one's faith on the apocalypse, the spectacular ending. Enzensberger describes a figure who prophesies the coming Day of Reckoning while all around him people get on with the day-to-day business of living:

Und also fühlt er auf seinem Scheunendach, unverzagt
krähend, daß der Weltuntergang immer aufs neue,
und wäre er noch so unpünktlich, mundet wie Manna,
daß er eine Art von Beruhigung ist, ein süßer Trost
bei trüber Aussicht, bei Haarausfall, und bei nassen Füßen.⁹³

Even here, Enzensberger permits a certain ambivalence about what is actually lost. According to the rationalist philosophy of the engineer on board, for example, popular attempts to equate personal loss with the end of the world are misplaced:

Salzwasser in der Tennishalle! Ja, das ist ärgerlich,
aber nasse Füße sind noch lang nicht das Ende der Welt.
Die Leute freuen sich immer zu früh auf den Untergang [...]⁹⁴

But it must not be forgotten that the rationalist, in spite of his attempts to prove the impossibility of the sinking of the Titanic, is one of those who goes under.

The theme of loss is connected to Enzensberger's focus on what endures. Like the ballads in Mausoleum, which suggested that history was epochal, where the elements of oppression survived or adapted to each new technology, the sinking of the Titanic does not mean the historical cessation of class conflict. Although Enzensberger questions the usefulness of utopian solutions, it does not follow that he believes that the political and

⁹³ Ibid., p. 70.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

social problems which made them necessary have disappeared. In several places, Der Untergang der Titanic suggests that what survives the disaster in 1912 is the enduring economic and political inequality across different sections of society. The poor and powerless are always the first to suffer. As the aristocracy and industrialists listen, unconcerned, to the band, the water rises:

Nur ganz unten, wo man, wie immer, zuerst kapiert,
werden Bündel, Babies, weinrote Inletts
hastig zusammengerafft. Das Zwischendeck
versteht kein Englisch, kein Deutsch, nur eines
braucht ihm kein Mensch zu erklären:
daß die Erste Klasse zuerst drankommt,
daß es nie genug Milch und nie genug Schuhe
und nie genug Rettungsboote für alle gibt.⁹⁵

This is reinforced by the narrator's subsequent assertion that:

Wir sitzen alle in einem Boot,
doch: Wer arm ist, geht schneller unter.⁹⁶

What survives the misguided revolutionary zeal in Cuba is the persistence of an unequal economic and political order. This fact is recognized in the 29th Canto, which suggests that there are no absolute endings 'als gäbe es etwas, das ganz und gar unterginge'.⁹⁷

There are always traces which endure, no matter what epochal changes seem to be taking place:

Wir glaubten noch an ein Ende, damals

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 97.

(wann: "damals"? 1912? 18? 45? 68?),
und das heißt: an einen Anfang.
Aber inzwischen wissen wir:
Das Dinner geht weiter.⁹⁸

The dinner, here standing for political inequalities, is symbolised in the text by the inclusion of the Titanic's lengthy and luxurious menus.

In the face of the loss of faith in utopias, and in the persistence of inequalities, Enzensberger explores not resignation but different ways of coming to terms with this condition. Two strategies of survival deserve particular attention, given Enzensberger's subsequent concerns, namely a celebration of ordinary ways of living, a rejection of grand theory in favour of a strengthened populism, and also a series of cantos which reflect on the processes and pleasures of aesthetic production. The populist strategy of survival is a minor but recurring thread. In the supplementary poem, 'Nur die Ruhe', Enzensberger juxtaposes a prophet and his followers, who warn the public about the approaching apocalypse, with the rest of the population who carry on with their ordinary business:

[...] Während wir andern,
beschäftigt mit unsern wichtigen Kinkerlitzchen,
die Sintflut im fernsten Perfekt vermuten,
oder wir halten sie gar für eine ehrwürdige Ente,
wissen jene, im Hochsitz lauernd, auf die Minute genau,
Wann. Rechtzeitig haben sie ihre Fernseher abgemeldet,
den Kühlschrank ausgeräumt, damit nichts verdirbt,
und ihre Seele gerüstet.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 69.

The passing of time proves them wrong about the end of the world and those whom they had admonished watch as each of them

[...] einer
nach dem andern sich, unter dem höhnischen Beifall
der Mitwelt, wieder abseilen wird in den niederen Alltag [...] ¹⁰⁰

Despite the banality of the everyday, Enzensberger suggests, it is a better place than the illusory world conjured up by the prophets of doom. The distance even in the period in Havana between ordinary people and misguided political theorists, who still believed in the emancipatory power of critical theory, is noted in the 9th Canto:

In den Eingeweiden der Hauptstadt rottete nämlich
das alte Elend fort, [...] "das Volk"
stand abends geduldig Schlange um ein Pizza,
während im Hotel Nacional, Terrasse zum Meer, [...]
da saßen nun ein paar alte Pariser Trotzisten
und warfen um sich mit Brotkugeln, "angenehm
subversiv", und mit Zitaten von Engels und Freud. ¹⁰¹

In the next canto, the irrelevance of political theory is confirmed in the argument going on at a neighbouring table between two figures, one certainly Engels and the other probably Bakunin, about the necessity of authority and discipline. The narrator is sympathetic towards Bakunin, but notes that it is now too late for him to be proved right. The last that is seen of the two is the empty table, drifting across the Atlantic. The dangers inherent in believing false prophets, and, by extension, in abstract theories rather than in the concrete, are underlined in the 5th Canto. The passivity of the masses before a revolutionary speaker, who does not fully understand them, just as they fail to

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 36.

make out the implications of his message, leads to their downfall.¹⁰² In complete contrast is the positive portrayal of everyday pragmatism in the face of real emergency. Enzensberger describes watching a news broadcast of an impending volcanic disaster off Iceland, where the television spectacle came to a premature end after an old man simply trained his hosepipe on the cascading lava:

[...] und so,
zwar aschgrau und nicht für immer, doch einstweilen,
den Untergang des Abendlandes aufschoben, dergestalt,
daß, [...]
heute noch diese Leute
in ihren kleinen bunten Holzhäusern morgens erwachen
und nachmittags, unbeachtet von Kameras, den Salat
in ihren Gärten, lavagedüngt und riesenköpfig,
sprengen, vorläufig nur, natürlich, doch ohne Panik.¹⁰³

The question arises of how Enzensberger, as a cultural producer and critic, is going to 'survive' the sinking of utopian projects. Several cantos question the possibility of art as a means of critical enlightenment. Just as critical theory seems undermined by popular needs and concerns in everyday life, art, too, can offer no guarantees that it communicates the truth. This point is made more explicitly in the poem, 'Weitere Gründe dafür, daß die Dichter lügen', where the language used in poetry is shown to be at a distance from events in real life:

Weil der Verdurstende seinen Durst
nicht über die Lippen bringt.
Weil im Munde der Arbeiterklasse
das Wort Arbeiterklasse nicht vorkommt.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 44.

[....]

Weil die Wörter zu spät kommen,

oder zu früh.

Weil es also ein anderer ist,

immer ein anderer,

der da redet,

und weil der,

von dem da die Rede ist,

schweigt.¹⁰⁴

As Philip Brady points out, several poems contribute to a debate about the legitimacy of the poet's activity¹⁰⁵, not least the four pieces on painters and paintings. There is a consistent equation of the activity of aesthetic creation with the notions of forgery, falsification and concealment. The figure of Salomon Pollock appears in both the 24th Canto and as the artist behind the painting, 'Der Raub der Suleika. Niederlandisch, Ende 19. Jahrhundert'. In the canto, the distance between reality and representation seems, to him at least in his alcoholic daze, to have been bridged as his images come to life. In his second appearance, however, he describes his artistic talents as those of a forger:

halb Alchimist und halb Schreiner,

unter den Restauratoren der beste.

[...]

ein treuer Fälscher, dessen täglich Brot

die Vergangenheit war, eine bessere gibt es nicht.¹⁰⁶

Despite his claims to be a forger rather than true creator, his work, 'ein Schwindel', is

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁰⁵ Brady, 'Watermarks on the Titanic', p. 12.

¹⁰⁶ Enzensberger, Der Untergang der Titanic, p. 82.

both 'sublim und rührend'.¹⁰⁷ Like the poet who creates a truth, because truth itself is silent, there is a certain pride in his skill:

du merkst es wohl, wie beredt ich bin
mit meinen Lügen. Die Wahrheit,
das dunkle Fenster dort in der Ecke,
die Wahrheit ist stumm.¹⁰⁸

This argument is a continuation, and its most extreme variant, of Enzensberger's exploration of the fictional nature of historiography carried out in Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie and in Mausoleum. Here the artist can use the forger's restorative skills to create fictions which can function as truths. Whereas other disciplinary discourses with more traditional claims to truth values, not only history, but also philosophy, political science and critical theory, are not emancipatory discourses but turn irrevocably into authoritarian structures, art's awareness of the fictionality of its own representations can lead it to avoid this impasse.

There is a second positive attribute to the realm of the aesthetic in Der Untergang der Titanic, and that is in the pleasure it can offer to both the producer and the consumer. The painter of 'Abendmahl. Venezianisch, 16. Jahrhundert' is adamant that pleasure is the principle upon which all art is based:

Wie oft soll ich es euch noch sagen!
Es gibt keine Kunst ohne das Vergnügen.¹⁰⁹

His attempt to paint the Last Supper is shown as a game of hide-and-seek with his interpreters and critics. It acts as a plea for representation to be accepted with a certain

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

ludic licence instead of being forced to conform to what the critics consider the 'real':

Meine Herrn, sprach ich, dies alles
habe ich frei erfunden zu meinem Vergnügen.
Aber die Sieben Richter der Heiligen Inquisition
raschelten mit ihren roten Roben
und murmelten: Überzeugt uns nicht.¹¹⁰

There is even pleasure to be had in trying to paint the end of the world, as the artist in 'Apokalypse. Umbrisch, etwa 1490', discovers. Despite fears of ageing and the growing awareness of his own mortality, the ability to surmount the technical difficulties of composition and the final completion of his masterpiece provides him with ample compensation. He watches his picture take shape slowly,

[...] bis daß der Weltuntergang
glücklich vollendet ist, und der Maler
erleichtert, für einen kurzen Augenblick;
unsinnig heiter, wie ein Kind,
als wär ihm das Leben geschenkt [...] ¹¹¹

The parallels between the act of aesthetic creation as pleasurable, even life-enhancing, to the old artist here and also to the narrator of the whole 'Komödie' of Der Untergang der Titanic, are unmistakable. The narrator, having constructed a multi-layered work from the detritus of personal and political loss, from a range of texts concerning the apocalypse, and drawing on art, popular culture, and documentary evidence of the demise of the Titanic, is the last figure in the book. He is shown to be a survivor:

Alles, heule ich, wie gehabt, alles schlingert, alles

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 13.

unter Kontrolle. alles läuft. die Personen vermutlich ertrunken
im schrägen Regen. schade, macht nichts, zum Heulen, auch gut,
undeutlich. schwer zu sagen, warum, heule und schwimme ich weiter.¹¹²

Although more desperate and confused than the artist at the completion of
'Apokalypse. Umbrisch, etwa 1490', he is still alive, surviving, swimming 'weiter'.

V

What, do you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure
in writing, do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task, if I were
not preparing - with a rather shaky hand - a labyrinth into which I can venture,
in which I can move my discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it
to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in
which I can lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet
again. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do
not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our
bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us
their morality when we write.¹¹³

The weight of evidence in Enzensberger's history of progress, Mausoleum, against
utopian reformers and innovators indicated his abandonment of large-scale political
solutions to contemporary problems and of his commitment to utopian thinking. The
relish with which the pleasures of aesthetic creation are treated in Der Untergang der
Titanic, and the critical attention to the complex role of myth and desire in the popular
imagination, leave the impression that he has withdrawn in resignation from the realm of
politics in favour of the construction of intricate aesthetic pieces. However, what is

¹¹² Ibid., p. 115.

¹¹³ Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, p. 17.

taking place across these works is not so much the abandonment of all forms of cultural politics as the articulation of a refined and redefined position. This is one which, admittedly, rejects large-scale utopian thinking, which rejects an avant-garde cultural practice in the vanguard of social change, anticipating and encouraging change by offering enlightenment to those incapable of the artist's perceptions. Instead, Enzensberger's work attempts to undermine and resist totalising social projects. He promotes instead a small-scale politics of provisionality, escape, subversion and resistance, and advocates a role for the artist as someone who offers not necessarily enlightenment but the pleasures of reading and thinking. This new position is never explicitly articulated. However, when Enzensberger's essays on political democracy in the 1970s and on the social nature of the act of writing are juxtaposed, a surprising consistency of terminology and of analysis is revealed which underlines the continuing interrelationship of politics and culture, despite his apparent aesthetic turn.

Enzensberger's enduring commitment to an anti-authoritarian political democracy in the Federal Republic is demonstrated in a short Spiegel essay in 1976. He bemoans the anti-democratic measures of the SPD-FDP coalition government, whose attempts to bypass the parliamentary constitution provoked the accusation that it was carrying out 'ein methodisches Zertrümmern demokratischen Porzellans, ein zielsicheres, fleißiges, elefantenhaftes Trampeln'.¹¹⁴ What the government was risking, according to Enzensberger, was the fragile democratic gains of the student movement and the early attempts to increase democracy in the Federal Republic under Willy Brandt's leadership. In his description of the costs in effort and personnel for the government to effect these political developments,

ganz zu schweigen von den Milliardenkosten für die innere Aufrüstung, für Polizei-Computer, Geheimdienste, Mobile Einsatzkommandos und für die technisch avanciertesten Gefängnisse der Welt,¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Enzensberger, 'Traktat vom Trampeln', Der Spiegel, 1976, 25, p. 140.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Enzensberger reveals the latest chapter of his history of progress. The Mausoleum to civilisation and barbarism is extended into the present political sphere with the increasing use of computers and other methods of politically motivated surveillance. His article champions disruption to the oppressive stability of what he terms the

strukturellen Terrorismus, der in den Institutionen herrscht: im Altersheim, im Polizeipräsidium, im Irrenhaus, im Gefängnis und im Erziehungs"heim".¹¹⁶

This analysis is extended in an essay in Kursbuch, published in 1979, which furnishes an analysis of the relationship between the individual and the state. Enzensberger argues that the Federal Republic houses two historically and structurally different systems of repression which are united in their ambition to perfect an "innere Sicherheit", a phrase which also occurs as the title of a supplementary poem in Der Untergang der Titanic.¹¹⁷ He describes the first of these systems of repression as recognisably German, and traces its commitment to political authoritarianism through Metternich, Bismarck and Hitler, to elements in the post-war reconstruction programmes of Adenauer. This authoritarian tendency exists imperfectly, a 'Kuddelmuddel', allowing absurdities and gaps, alongside another system of repression, more international in its origins and appearances. Enzensberger notes that the latter is a product of the post-war period in the Federal Republic and grows out of the integration of the working class through mass consumption and the development of the welfare state. The ideological exploitation of technological rationality in this second system of repression nevertheless connects it with the critique of scientific and technological projects in many ballads in Mausoleum. The experts of this less visible means of control and repression

gehören dem technokratischen Typus an, haben fast immer ein Hochschulstudium hinter sich und verfügen meist über ein ziemlich

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 141.

¹¹⁷ Enzensberger, Der Untergang der Titanic, p. 39.

differenziertes Weltbild.[...] Seine einzige Obsession ist die Sicherheit [...] Um es zu erreichen, muß der Experte alle denkbaren Störungen vorhersehen und eliminieren, ganz egal, woher sie rühren und was ihre Motivation sein mag.¹¹⁸

For Enzensberger, the projects of these experts, whose political home lies not in conservatism, but in liberalism and social democracy, are the only contemporary attempts to construct utopias.¹¹⁹ He describes the technology of observation at the disposal of the 'liberal' police, arguing that the access of the central police computer at Wiesbaden to a network of data banks means that an individual is subject to an astonishing degree of monitoring.¹²⁰ He concludes:

Es ist sicher, daß die Bevölkerung Westdeutschlands heute einem Grad von Überwachung unterliegt, der historisch präzedenzlos ist; die Gestapo konnte von technischen Mitteln dieser Reichweite nur träumen.¹²¹

Enzensberger suggests that the intrusive nature of contemporary policing does not occur against the wishes of the citizen, but finds popular legitimation because it seems simultaneously to satisfy genuine social needs for protection against violence, crime, pollution and economic crisis. The measures which promise a more ordered, civilised society also bring about a society dominated by control, regulation and surveillance. Foucault's description of the key change in the history of punishment as the move from the disciplining of the body to the surveillance and knowledge of the subject finds a

¹¹⁸ Enzensberger, 'Unentwegter Versuch, einem New Yorker Publikum die Geheimnisse der deutschen Demokratie zu erklären', *Kursbuch*, 56, 1979, p. 10.

¹¹⁹ See also Enzensberger, 'Zwei Randbemerkungen zum Weltuntergang', p. 229.

¹²⁰ Enzensberger's argument here resembles Foucault's analysis of the emergence of a disciplinary society through an obsession with monitoring and surveillance, the central feature of which is the construction of the Panopticon model adopted by prisons, schools and barracks. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Peregrine, London, 1987, especially pp. 195-228 on Panopticism.

¹²¹ Enzensberger, 'Unentwegter Versuch', p. 11.

strong echo in Enzensberger's account. For Foucault, public execution and torture was abandoned because the spectacle of power, its social visibility, always carried the risk of opening up a location for resistance to that power.¹²² The invisible marks of discipline which took place in prisons, shut away from view, ran less risk of provoking counter measures. Enzensberger notes similarly that the classical form of repression was comparatively ineffective:

Eine Polizeigewalt, die sich unverhüllt und brutal auf der Straße zeigt, wirkt immer polarisierend; sie bringt Millionen von Menschen gegen sich auf und erzeugt tiefgreifende, dauerhafte Konflikte. Ihre Logik ist die des latenten Bürgerkriegs. Die neuen, "wissenschaftlichen" Methoden der sozialen Kontrolle zielen dagegen auf Integration; sie sind zu klinisch, zu unblutig, um starke massenhafte Gefühle wie Haß und Solidarität zu wecken.¹²³

Hence the 'police', in all their contemporary forms, achieve an extensive degree of social control with public consent. The public gains an efficient bureaucracy and an ordered society. What is lost, however, is the 'sakrosante[n] Privatsphäre'¹²⁴ and the possibility of anything remaining hidden from view.

Although the tone of Enzensberger's piece is relaxed and humorous, his identification of the way that power operates in contemporary German society through surveillance and control is echoed in essays written at the same time concerning the function of literature. He articulates a theory of writing which shows it to be a method of evading social control through the creation of hidden spaces, through complexity and aesthetic games. The utopian projects of the technocrats, including the massive computing

¹²² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 59-61.

¹²³ Enzensberger, 'Unentwegter Versuch', p. 14.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 13. In a late essay, Foucault also discusses just this dialectic of social control as part of the history of policing. See Foucault, 'The Political Technology of Individuals', in Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, Patrick H. Hutton (eds), *Technologies of the Self*, Tavistock, London, 1988, pp. 145-62.

facilities at the disposal of the police under Dr. Herold, could be undermined by the four qualities of 'Gelächter, Schlamperei, Zufall und Entropie'¹²⁵, which subvert plans to impose rigid order and claims to true knowledge about events. The artist in Der Untergang der Titanic, who paints a turtle into a picture only to cover it up before the critics can see it, is an example of the way that aesthetic production can recover something for the private sphere by hiding what is important from the regulators:

Die heilige Johanna ist nicht mein berühmtestes,
aber vielleicht mein bestes Bild.
Keiner außer mir weiß, warum.¹²⁶

In a paper presented in 1978, the year of publication of Der Untergang der Titanic, Enzensberger was unusually clear on this theory of writing as a means, not of enlightenment or revelation, but as a process of hiding, of resisting assimilation. In his speech to the International P.E.N. Club on the subject of 'Writing as a Disguise', he considered the different ways that literature could be an activity of concealment:

The one I liked best, because it corresponds to what is, and has been, a favourite notion of mine ever since I started writing, asked if literature could not perhaps be considered as a hiding-place.¹²⁷

In a subsequent speech, he explained how he found talk about literature disturbing:

Ich mache die Tür hinter mir zu, ich verstecke mich. Ja, meine Lieben, mein

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

¹²⁶ Enzensberger, Der Untergang der Titanic, p. 33.

¹²⁷ Enzensberger, A Game of Hide and Seek, unpublished paper read to the International P.E.N. Club, in Stockholm, 1978. A copy was submitted by Enzensberger to the editor of the British literary magazine, Rialto, and extracts were used to accompany several of his poems. See Rialto, 3, Summer 1985, p. 19. I am grateful to the editor for the opportunity to read through the complete manuscript.

Gedicht ist mein Versteck.¹²⁸

The activities of hiding and concealment, and the ability of the writer to adopt disguises, are all means to thwart social attempts to classify, order, control and assimilate:

Writing is an attempt to escape from social control, and this is precisely what makes it irresistible to some of us. We all know, from more or less bitter experience, that social control is a Protean force, that it can take on a thousand different forms. It may appear in the shape of brutal repression or of soft-headed self-censorship.¹²⁹

Literature is seen here as an elaborate game of hide and seek, in which, Enzensberger notes, there is a legitimate and welcome role for those readers who try to engage in the pleasures of reading through a process of 'productive anarchy'.¹³⁰ However,

it is quite another matter when interpretation assumes an official, institutional and scientific status, as it is prone to do in schools and universities. Instead of productive anarchy, we get stifling order; instead of a free game, we get social control. This, of course, is the reason why the state supports an army of professionals devoted to the task of finding us out.¹³¹

This theory of literature is in contrast to the earlier decrees made by Enzensberger which expressly urged that his poems be understood as public articles, exploiting their

¹²⁸ Enzensberger, 'Eine Rede über die Rede', unpublished speech delivered at the 'Nights of Poetry' event in Yugoslavia in 1980 and quoted in Karla Lydia Schultz, 'Writing as Disappearing: Enzensberger's Negative Utopian Move', *Monatshefte*, 1986, 78 (2), p. 201.

¹²⁹ Enzensberger, *A Game of Hide and Seek*.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

very visibility in the public sphere.¹³² Although there is a consistent, anti-authoritarian, democratic cultural politics in operation in both instances, the strategies are almost reversed. The earlier poems tried to subvert the manipulative discourse of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', where to be part of a visible network of publications was to participate in a struggle against anti-democratic discourse. Resistance took the form of enlightenment, a revelation of truth and the production of a form of counter-knowledge; social control was escaped by uncovering its true nature and methods, and then by changing its operations. Enzensberger's subsequent post-utopian position also seeks to escape social control, primarily by producing invisible spaces, limited heterotopias, which cannot be monitored by the 'police', whether they be literary critics or the bureaucrats with their technologies of observation. He does not attempt to analyse how forms of social control in the Federal Republic can be changed. He suggests that they can only be evaded by adopting a strategy of disguise and subversion.

The utopian strategies for popular enlightenment practised by Enzensberger in the 1960s are too large-scale and dogmatic for him in the subsequent decade. He criticises the Left as much as the government for authoritarian tendencies:

Zu der staatserhaltenden Zensur der Law-und-order-Leute haben sich in den Gesellschafts- und Humanwissenschaften nun auch noch die Irrenwärter von links gesellt, die uns mit ihren Tranquilizern stilllegen wollen.¹³³

Although his theory of the media had ended with Gramsci's celebrated dictum, 'Pessimismus der Intelligenz, Optimismus des Willens'¹³⁴, which highlights an awareness of the practical difficulties of achieving social change, his work in the 1970s rejects forms of cultural politics based on revolutionary politics and utopian commitments. The media theory had, though, noted that the role of the author is to work as an agent

¹³² See Chapter Two, pp. 51-52.

¹³³ Enzensberger, 'Zwei Randbemerkungen zum Weltuntergang', pp. 233-34.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Enzensberger, 'Baukasten', p. 129.

of the masses:

Gänzlich verschwinden kann er erst dann in ihnen, wenn sie selbst zu Autoren, den Autoren der Geschichte geworden sind.¹³⁵

The publications in the 1970s suggest that the disappearance of the authorial figure is taking place, with Enzensberger's metaphor of writing as disappearing. Moreover, the 'Verteidigung der Normalität'¹³⁶ undertaken by Enzensberger in subsequent essays, indicates that perhaps the masses in the Federal Republic are trusted now to act as the agents of their own history.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Enzensberger, 'Zur Verteidigung der Normalität', Kursbuch, 68, 1982, pp. 51-62.

**CHAPTER SIX : The plebiscite of the Kleinbürger: Enzensberger,
cultural populism and the Federal Republic in the 1980s**

I

Ich habe nicht die geringste Ahnung, wer sie als erster verflucht hat, die Normalität; aber es sollte mich nicht wundern, wenn es ein Dichter gewesen wäre.¹

Enzensberger's publications in the decade following Der Untergang der Titanic in 1978 are notable not least for the recurrence of certain key themes and the comparative stability of his position.² He adopts the role of an ironic and bemused observer of contemporary German society, charting the emergence of, in his view, a stable and successful democracy and the irresistible rise of the Kleinbürger, the specifically German variant of the member of the lower middle class or petit-bourgeoisie. In comparison with much of his earlier work, there is considerable appreciation both of the general state of the nation's political culture (which is far from being a personal endorsement of either Chancellor Kohl or his predecessor, Helmut Schmidt) and also of the qualities and activities of the Kleinbürger. Enzensberger's attitude towards the Federal Republic is not without its ambiguities, but there is consistent if qualified praise for the cultural and political activity of the ordinary west German. His position in this period is consequently not only of great significance in understanding the development of his own cultural politics but also in the wider context of the relationship in German history between intellectuals and the ordinary public. If, as George Steiner argues, the

¹ Enzensberger, 'Zur Verteidigung der Normalität', p. 211.

² The continuity of much of Enzensberger's work in this period is also noted by Jürgen Haupt, 'Die Verteidigung des "Kuddelmuddels" - Enzensbergers Spätwerk: über Kleinbürgertum, Fortschritt und Individualität', Literatur für Leser, 1991 (3), pp. 129-146, and Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, pp. 128-29.

era of Enlightenment in western history was characterised by attempts by intellectuals to bring culture and learning to the masses³, then Enzensberger, as an intellectual writing in support of the general public and refusing to impose his learning on the masses, occupies a place outside this tradition. This stance is unusual in German intellectual history, which has seen numerous attacks on the banality of popular culture from figures on both the right and the left.⁴ Enzensberger's support for the mundane nature of the contemporary Federal Republic has its provocative side. It not only distances him from so many traditional principles of the left which aim to highlight the manipulative tendencies in popular culture and to emancipate the masses from their exploitative conditions, but also breaks a taboo in championing a social group which has always been viewed with great suspicion. However, the number of essays in which he outlines his points and the accumulation of evidence to support his argument over a decade suggests that this position should be taken seriously in its own terms and not just as a way of provoking his former colleagues on the German left.

Enzensberger's positive stance hinges on a readiness to accept that the Federal Republic in the 1980s is no longer the 'armes und verhetztes Land'⁵ that it was until 1960, nor is it characterised, as Enzensberger suggested in 1968, by a political system which 'läßt sich nicht mehr reparieren'.⁶ It is not even the Federal Republic of the 1970s, described in the poem, 'Andenken':

Also was die siebziger Jahre betrifft,

³ See Stuart Parkes, 'Postmodern polemics: Recent intellectual debates in Germany', in Osman Durrani, Colin Good and Kevin Hilliard (eds), The New Germany - Literature and Society after unification, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1995, p. 93.

⁴ Enzensberger is fully aware of these intellectual traditions in Germany. See his comments in 'Armes reiches Deutschland!- Vorstudien zu einem Sittenbild', Politische Brosamen, pp. 180-87 and in the essay, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn: Ein Vorschlag zur Güte', in Mittelmaß und Wahn, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, pp. 253-54.

⁵ Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 255.

⁶ Enzensberger's Selbstzitat forms part of his argument in 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 253.

kann ich mich kurz fassen.

Die Auskunft war immer besetzt.

Die wundersame Brotvermehrung

beschränkte sich auf Düsseldorf und Umgebung.

Die furchtbare Nachricht lief über den Ticker,

wurde zur Kenntnis genommen und archiviert.

Widerstandslos, im großen und ganzen,

haben sie sich selber verschluckt,

die siebziger Jahre,

ohne Gewähr für Nachgeborene,

Türken und Arbeitslose.

Daß irgendwer ihrer mit Nachsicht gedächte,

wäre zuviel verlangt.⁷

Enzensberger's snapshot depicts a bleak, divided German republic. It is a society of extremes in which great economic growth benefits the few, while the losers of the period after the global oil crisis, the unemployed, the Gastarbeiter who had helped to achieve the German 'Wirtschaftswunder' and the generations to come are insecure and excluded at the margins of society. It is difficult to detect any note of optimism: any attempt at communication seems to be thwarted and the signs of impending crisis are simply noted and stored in the archives, rather than acted upon. Enzensberger's detached and neutral tone has been criticised, as has his reluctance to accept that German society was changed for the better by the student movement in the late 1960s, despite its failure to implement social reform on the desired scale:

Enzensberger is oblivious to the indisputable fact that the student movement and successive movements have achieved a change in the political culture of West

⁷ Enzensberger, Die Furie des Verschwindens, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1980, p. 9.

Germany and the private lives of many of her citizens, raised the general level of political consciousness and initiated the development of novel alternative modes of life.⁸

If Enzensberger was guilty of ignoring some very real advances in the nature of west German society over the 1970s, his attitude is certainly different in his observations of the Federal Republic in the 1980s. He consistently draws attention to what he perceives as improvements in the private lives of ordinary Germans, not least the astonishing diversity of lifestyles in the contemporary Federal Republic, and notes a number of positive changes in west German political culture. Where he parts company with his critics, though, is in the emphasis he places on the material prosperity of the Federal Republic as the necessary condition for the increasing opportunities available to the ordinary west German, rather than on the political strategies of the student movement of which he was, for a time at least, one of the leading theorists.

The principles behind Enzensberger's stance, and some of the ambiguities of his position, are neatly encapsulated in his contribution to the establishment of a journal, Transatlantik, to greet the new decade in 1980. Enzensberger's role as an editor of Kursbuch had ended in 1975 after he stepped down from his previous close involvement in the publication, although it subsequently carried the line 'Unter Mitarbeit von H. M. Enzensberger'. Despite Enzensberger's claims that it still carried out an important political function, Kursbuch no longer appeared to be consistently at the cutting edge of political and social debate on the left in German politics, with one critic even seeing it as a symptom of a 'neudeutsche Klebrigkeit'.⁹ In line with his original intention that Kursbuch should contribute to the 'politische Alphabetisierung Deutschlands'¹⁰, Enzensberger had quickly declined to publish poetry or fiction in

⁸ Linstead and Oeser, 'Sauwetter' & 'Eskapismus', p. 27.

⁹ Wolfgang Pohrt, 'Der Weg des Kursbuchs in die neudeutsche Klebrigkeit', Literatur konkret, 1980 (5), pp. 18-23. For an assessment of the failure of Kursbuch at the end of the 1970s, see Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, pp. 129-130.

¹⁰ Enzensberger, 'Gemeinplätze, die neueste Literatur betreffend', Palaver, p. 53.

favour of political essays and reports. At first sight, Transatlantik appeared to follow a similar course in view of Enzensberger's determination to accept only factual reports based on 'Wirklichkeitsforschung en détail'¹¹, and to exclude literature again.¹² Like Kursbuch, Enzensberger's new journal intended to eschew a rigid agenda of issues in favour of a more flexible, open range of themes. However, the similarities in the two journalistic projects ended there. Central to the project of Kursbuch had always been the political enlightenment of west German citizens. It aimed to educate its readers and to help promote a democratic and emancipatory politics. Enzensberger was adamant that the primary role of the new journal should not be to provide a political education for the west German public. Any radical aims were abandoned with Enzensberger's insistence in Transatlantik on publishing elegant and amusing essays which would aim at a 'Durchbrechung der Biederkeit'.¹³ The sense of Transatlantik performing an important interventionist role in the political discourse of its time is therefore much reduced, although the generous measure of playfulness and irony in several of Enzensberger's essays might still be considered to be part of a strategy of provocation.

Enzensberger's new aims rested in large part on the assumed readership of the journal. Several statements suggest that he no longer considered the west German public to be in urgent need of political enlightenment or to require lengthy essays educating it about the state of the contemporary Federal Republic. Instead, he emphasised the changes in the cultural awareness of the public at the beginning of the 1980s:

Die Westdeutschen sind anspruchsvoller geworden. Das ist nicht nur eine ökonomische, sondern auch eine kulturelle Tatsache. Wir sehen darin die Folge

¹¹ See Grimm, 'Poetic Anarchism? The Case of Hans Magnus Enzensberger', Texturen. Essays und anderes zu Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 127, where he quotes from letters written to him by Enzensberger on this subject.

¹² The pattern adopted by Enzensberger in the latter half of the 1960s, when he was productive in essay form and almost inactive in writing poetry, is largely repeated in the 1980s. There are no new volumes of poetry between 1980 and 1991.

¹³ See Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 130, and Warnecke, 'Kurswechselparade eines Intellektuellen', p. 99.

eines über 30jährigen Friedens, des enorm wachsenden gesellschaftlichen Reichtums und eines zunehmenden Selbstbewußtseins.¹⁴

Here Enzensberger leaves himself open to criticism that his new readership is composed simply of a well-off section of German society which claims to have the necessary degree of taste to discern between different consumer goods. In fact, Enzensberger's awareness that his readers

in Buchhandlungen genauso zu Hause sind wie in Delikatessenläden, daß sie nicht irgendeinen Wagen fahren, sondern ein ganz bestimmten¹⁵

only seems to confirm that his 'anspruchsvoller' Germans are those with enough economic and cultural capital to be demanding and discriminating consumers. However, 'anspruchsvoll' can also imply a critically aware public, and accompanying Enzensberger's assertion that west German society has become 'anspruchsvoll' is his insistence that the Transatlantik project rests on the supposition 'daß es ein mündiges Publikum gibt'.¹⁶ Enzensberger argues here that west German society has reached a level of maturity and responsibility. Taken together, these statements suggest that his readers are discerning in several senses. They are sophisticated consumers and responsible citizens, well-read (which in part explains Enzensberger's confidence to experiment in several essays with narrative devices and the inclusion of fictional characters), and able to make informed choices about what to buy as well as about the society in which they live. This introduces an important development in Enzensberger's cultural politics: the link between sophisticated consumption and the ability to make responsible social and political decisions. The supposition that the west German public has now reached an admirable degree of 'Mündigkeit', or maturity, is still highly

¹⁴ Taken from the Ankündigungsprospekt announcing the publication of Transatlantik and quoted in Hermann L. Gremliza, 'Journal des Luxus und der Moden', Literatur konkret, 1980 (5), p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

contentious, and Rolf Warnecke's suspicions concerning Enzensberger's claims are not without foundation.¹⁷ However, Enzensberger provides precisely the historical and sociological background which Warnecke misses here, and upon which his own assertions are based, in several essays later published in Transatlantik.

Enzensberger's Transatlantik project received much criticism. A major exception was Der Spiegel, which recognised that Transatlantik

versammelt politische Essays, flanierende Reiseberichte und detektivische Reportagen, die die selten gewordene Eigenschaft haben, schön und dennoch genau, radikal und dennoch heiter zu sein.¹⁸

It was sympathetic towards Enzensberger's attempt to combine journalism with literature in an 'Untersuchung der Wirklichkeit mit literarischen Mitteln'.¹⁹ However, most critics attacked the fact that the journal was published by the NewMag Verlag of Heinz von Nouhuys, considered highly dubious for his right-leaning views and for his publication of the soft-porn magazine, Lui. Enzensberger's statements were also criticised for what was perceived to be their superficiality and opportunism.²⁰ Even if Enzensberger is given the benefit of the doubt for his association with von Nouhuys - and his own attempts at self-justification using the argument that he favours a 'produktionsorientierte Moral'²¹ are problematic - there still remains the question of the

¹⁷ 'Kein Wort allerdings darüber, worin diese Mündigkeit bestehen soll; keine Erklärung für das plötzlich konstatierte zunehmende Selbstbewußtsein der Westdeutschen und scheinbar auch keinerlei Bedürfnis, dieses Selbstbewußtsein ideologiekritisch zu befragen', Warnecke, 'Kurswechselparade eines Intellektuellen', p. 99.

¹⁸ Harald Wieser, 'Heinrich Heine im Alfa Romeo', Der Spiegel, 1980, 40, p. 245.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 247.

²⁰ For a summary of the attacks on Transatlantik, see Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, pp. 130-31.

²¹ Enzensberger in Fritz J. Raddatz, 'Die Wahrheit ist immer riskant. Gespräch mit H. M. Enzensberger über die neue Zeitschrift Transatlantik', Die Zeit, 19 September 1980.

nature of the German society that Transatlantik aimed to report on and to represent.

Enzensberger's Federal Republic in its 1980s form is certainly 'neuartig, banal und unergründlich'²², it is evidently 'mittelmäßig' and characterised by a pervasive 'Normalität', but most importantly, it is a society in which Enzensberger feels at ease and at home.²³ It is a society whose complexities and contradictions are repeatedly explored in essays written mainly for Transatlantik up to 1982 and subsequently for a range of journals including Der Spiegel, Stern, Geo and Natur, and for newspapers from Die Zeit to Neue Zürcher Zeitung. These essays attempt to answer Enzensberger's call for an ethnology of modern-day Germany, a 'große[s] Sittengemälde der Bundesrepublik'.²⁴ His interest in contemporary cultural and social practices was revived at the end of the 1970s with his cycle of songs for Ingrid Caven, which formed a series of 'Berichte zur Lage der Nation'. According to Der Spiegel, these texts

besingen vorzugsweise die Sumpfblüten der Wohlstandsgesellschaft, kleine Leute, Zu-kurz-Gekommene, Huren, Ganoven, Mörder, Spieler, Trinker.²⁵

This investigation was continued in the initial section of his subsequent volume of poetry, Die Furie des Verschwindens, which offered a bittersweet set of 'Momentaufnahmen aus den siebziger Jahren [...], Berichte aus dem Inneren des Landes und seiner Bewohner'.²⁶ Although the song-cycle and poetic snapshots

²² See the Beizettel accompanying Mittelmaß und Wahn.

²³ It is interesting to note that, given his explicit desire to live almost anywhere but Germany in the late 1950s and 1960s, Enzensberger has been resident in the Federal Republic since 1970 and in Munich since 1979.

²⁴ Enzensberger, 'Kassensturz - Ein Bonner Memorandum', Mittelmaß und Wahn, p. 116.

²⁵ Wolf Donner, 'Berichte zur Lage der Nation: Ingrid Caven singt Lieder von Hans Magnus Enzensberger', Der Spiegel, 1979, 42, p. 249.

²⁶ Enzensberger, introductory notes to Die Furie des Verschwindens, p. 2.

anticipate themes and concerns which are explored more fully in subsequent essays, their at times bitter, pessimistic and sarcastic tone, as well as their focus on some of the outsiders and marginalised figures at odds with contemporary values, sets them apart from Enzensberger's later cheerful and playful mood. Enzensberger's 'Vorstudien zu einem Sittenbild'²⁷ of the Federal Republic concentrates instead on the large sections of German society which have benefited from the 'Wirtschaftswunder' and subsequent material success. Enzensberger explores the implications of economic prosperity as he charts the post-war history of west Germany. Instead of assenting to a west Berlin friend's dismissive depiction of rival German cities, which she finds

neureich und schäbig, selbstzufrieden und geschmacklos, mit einem Wort:
westdeutsch. [...] [E]in seelenloses Disneyland, in dem der Wohlstand wütet,²⁸

he shows how the roots of this prosperity (and the guilt at their own success²⁹) can be traced back to the need for Germans to rebuild their country after the end of the Second World War. Enzensberger suggests that cultural critics on both the right and the left who were scathing about west Germany's new prosperity were motivated largely by a moral revulsion at this undeserved success. In this essay Enzensberger tries to distance himself from both the criticism of the right, behind which lies the fears about the loss of values and the rise of the masses and, more importantly, from the polemics of the 'Neue Linke', whose members often came from 'streng[e] Lehrer- und Pfarrersfamilien'³⁰ and who were therefore disappointed in the desires of the general public for material consumption. According to Enzensberger,

[d]ie Wehklage über den platten Materialismus der Bundesdeutschen, über die

²⁷ The subtitle to Enzensberger's 'Armes reiches Deutschland' essay.

²⁸ Enzensberger, 'Armes reiches Deutschland', p. 178.

²⁹ 'Der eigene Wohlstand scheint den Bürgern der Bundesrepublik wie ein stummer Vorwurf auf der Seele zu liegen'. Ibid., p. 181.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 183.

Freßorgien des Wirtschaftswunders, über die geistferne und im tiefsten Grunde verwerfliche Haltung einer bösen und gierigen Bevölkerung hat uns durch nunmehr drei Jahrzehnte hindurch treu begleitet.³¹

Although he allows that prosperity might be justifiably criticised by those excluded from it, he concludes by suggesting that, as the economic strength of the Federal Republic has begun to falter, it is time to examine the nature of west Germany's wealth before it disappears:

[i]ch persönlich glaube nicht daran, daß es gefährlicher ist, satt zu sein, als zu hungern. [...] Daß es uns immer noch einigermaßen gut geht, dieses Los sollten wir mit ein wenig Distanz, mit einer Spur von Ironie ertragen.³²

A fuller picture of west German prosperity and the kind of society it has produced is given in the essay, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn'. Whereas Enzensberger's previous explorations of contemporary society had been undertaken in the final stages of Schmidt's SPD-led coalition government, the latter essay was published after six years of Helmut Kohl's CDU chancellorship and from within a political climate dominated by the centre-right. Given Enzensberger's antipathy towards the CDU governments in the 1950s and 1960s, it might be expected that he would be more critical of the 'Sittenbild' of this version of the Federal Republic. For many commentators, the return to political conservatism heralded by the change in government after the years of social democracy in the late 1960s and 1970s made parallels between the years of CDU dominance under Adenauer in the 1950s and the new CDU hegemony under Kohl inevitable. For Enzensberger, even if Kohl might seem to be 'ein Überbleibsel'³³ from the early years of the Federal Republic, unlike earlier CDU politicians, what is significant is that he really represents the essential harmlessness of contemporary political figures. Enzensberger

³¹ Ibid., p. 180.

³² Ibid., p. 193.

³³ Enzensberger, 'Die Installateure der Macht', Politische Brosamen, pp. 130-31.

insists that in important ways, despite the return of conservative values and the dominance of the CDU, the Federal Republic is very different thirty years on from its 1950s incarnation. Not only does he identify a historical break in the 1960s with a different society emerging after this period³⁴, he also claims that in any case the growing complexity of social processes means that politicians no longer enjoy the ability to steer society in a chosen direction, much less the ability to impose authoritarian conditions on the public or to set a national agenda. Even Kohl's attempts to limit discussion on the subject of German history and particularly on National Socialism backfire as this just reopens the debate until 'Auschwitz ist gegenwärtiger denn je'.³⁵ If the character of west German society is no longer determined by its leading politicians - and Enzensberger insists that

[d]ie Bundesrepublik ist relativ stabil und relativ erfolgreich, nicht weil, sondern obwohl sie von Leuten regiert wird, die von den Wahlplakaten herunter grinsen,³⁶

then he locates this stability in the extensive 'Mittelmaß' of the Federal Republic which 'zur wahren Heimat geworden ist' and which he links to the cultural and political hegemony of the middle classes or 'Besserverdienenden'.³⁷ Although the term 'Mittelmaß' often has pejorative associations, clear from its usual English translation of 'mediocrity', Enzensberger's use of the term draws attention to its more positive connotations including the avoidance of extremes and the ability to find 'das gesunde Mittelmaß' or the happy medium. The use of the word 'Mittelmaß' is apt for Enzensberger's strategy of instigating a reconsideration of the mediocre achievements of the Federal Republic. His west Germany, dominated neither by the very rich nor very

³⁴ Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 251.

³⁵ Enzensberger, 'Das empfindliche Ungeheuer - Eine Wahlkampf-Unterhaltung aus dem Jahre 1987 mit Hellmuth Karasek', Mittelmaß und Wahn, pp. 229, 242.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 228.

³⁷ Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 259.

poor, and existing at a distance from its troubled past and without utopian dreams for the future, is nevertheless characterised as the least unhappy German state that has yet existed. To suggest that the Federal Republic is actually a happy period in German history is, as Enzensberger notes with some relish, to break a critical taboo.³⁸ Despite unemployment and other social problems, Enzensberger is so convinced of the stability of the social and political consensus that he claims that social conflict is unlikely and even that an escalation into civil war has now become unimaginable: 'ein so hohes Maß an Ultrastabilität hat es in der deutschen Geschichte noch nie gegeben'.³⁹ Enzensberger attributes this political and social stability to the general prosperity of west Germany. Even those who might be excluded from the benefits of the affluent society do not reject that society, but essentially assent to it as an economic model and aspire to share in its rewards. Few groups, it follows, would pursue a politics so radical that the prosperity of the nation might be put at risk. Although Enzensberger's commentary is largely descriptive, he does not challenge this social model which appears to give a privileged position to economic benefits above any other social good. In his view, the west German commitment to democratic politics is rightly linked to the ability of the German economy to deliver an appropriate standard of living:

Dieser Reichtum ist vor allem die materielle Voraussetzung für die Demokratisierung aller Lebensverhältnisse, mit der sich die Westdeutschen nicht nur abgefunden, die sie sich vielmehr bis zu einem erstaunlichen Grade zu eigen gemacht haben.⁴⁰

Thus, as long as its material wants are satisfied, the west German public feels able to retreat from the political sphere, only forming ad hoc and temporary coalition groups when there is a perceived threat to specific shared interests. In Enzensberger's opinion,

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 254-59.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 260-61. Enzensberger's assumption of contemporary stability was shattered by events after 1989. See Enzensberger, Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1993.

⁴⁰ Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 262.

this retreat from politics is both a luxury and a positive sign that the Federal Republic is working properly. Material wealth not only allows ordinary citizens to get on with their own lives, to withdraw not only from political extremes but from much of the general business of politic life, it also promotes the culture of 'Mittelmaß', a positive condition in which individual diversity can flourish:

Das Mittelmaß, das in dieser Republik herrscht, zeichnet sich durch ein Maximum an Variation und Differenzierung aus. Subjektiv erscheint diese bewegliche Mischung als ein Zuwachs an Freiheitsgraden, Chancen, Wahlmöglichkeiten.⁴¹

This version of 'Mittelmaß', best understood as the net results of a conglomeration of individual lifestyles and interests, is a long way from the pejorative expressions coined by Enzensberger in earlier works (such as 'Pudding', 'Puree', 'Brei' and even 'Schaum'⁴²) to describe what he perceived as the glutinous homogeneity of contemporary consumer society. Even under the conservatism of Kohl, the Federal Republic is characterised by 'die Vermehrung individueller Optionen' leading to 'eine endlose Variabilität'.⁴³ The emphasis the Chancellor repeatedly places on his own provincial roots means that, in fact, Kohl might in a bizarre way be seen as a very fitting leader of a nation whose

Exotik des Alltags [...] äußert sich am deutlichsten in der Provinz. Niederbayrische Marktflecken, Dörfer in der Eifel, Kleinstädte in Holstein bevölkern sich mit Figuren, von denen noch vor dreißig Jahren niemand sich etwas träumen ließ.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 263.

⁴² Jürgen Haupt makes a similar point, describing these terms as '[i]nsgesamt also Metaphern diffuser Ungreifbarkeit und verächtlicher Massenhaftigkeit', in Haupt, 'Die Verteidigung des "Kuddelmuddels"', p. 131.

⁴³ Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', pp. 263-64.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 264.

Although the Federal Republic, given the political history out of which it has emerged, is still 'kein gewöhnliches Land'⁴⁵, it is praised as 'Durchschnitt und Spitze zugleich'.⁴⁶ Its energetic pursuit of economic prosperity and the apparent simultaneous decline in the power at the disposal of its political classes has encouraged the emergence of a consumer-led democracy whose mediocrity and relative ordinariness are worth cherishing. Although Enzensberger's path from the acerbic and highly critical 'Verteidigung der Wölfe' in the CDU-led Federal Republic of the 1950s to his ironic and playful 'Verteidigung der Normalität'⁴⁷ at the time of a reassertion of conservative politics in west Germany might seem bizarre, his latter position still reveals a commitment to the maintenance of a democratic political culture. The mediocrity of west Germany in the 1980s is certainly no utopia, and linked to the pervasive 'Mittelmaß' is the darker side which leads to 'Wahn', but it is clear why, to Enzensberger, the modest successes of '[d]ie Republik des Mittelmaßes'⁴⁸ might offer an appealing alternative to more extreme political orders.

II

Das Modell der kleinbürgerlichen Kultur setzt einen gewissen gesellschaftlichen Reichtum voraus. Erst wenn die Produktion hochgradig organisiert ist, kann sich die gesellschaftliche Sphäre der Distribution, der Zirkulation und der Verwaltung derartig ausdehnen, daß eine breite "Mittelklasse" entsteht.

Umgekehrt schmilzt erst mit zunehmender Zentralisation und Konzentration des

⁴⁵ Enzensberger, 'Die Vorzüge der Peinlichkeit', Mittelmaß und Wahn, p. 226. Enzensberger sees the widespread reluctance to wear state honours and embarrassment at state ceremonies as another positive sign, namely that west Germans are sensitive about the German past and are conscious of the misuse of civic rituals under National Socialism.

⁴⁶ Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 266.

⁴⁷ Enzensberger, 'Zur Verteidigung der Normalität', pp. 207-224.

⁴⁸ Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 276.

Kapitals die herrschende Klasse so weit zusammen, daß sie die kulturelle Hegemonie einbüßt.⁴⁹

Enzensberger's positive reclamation of the term 'mittelmäßig' has a parallel in his revaluation of the Kleinbürger. This concept is difficult to define precisely in sociological terms, but in German political discourse since the 19th century, the term 'Kleinbürger' has often been used mockingly to denote a stick-in-the-mud, someone unable or unwilling to perceive the pace and nature of social change. It also has more negative overtones:

Aus der ironisierten Figur des zurückgebliebenen Biedermannes wird unversehens das Schreckbild des Untertanen und 'ewigen Spießers' (Ö. von Horvath), in dem sich alle dämonischen Eigenschaften eines verhängnisvollen deutschen Syndroms verdichten.⁵⁰

Franke's history charts the conservative aspirations which are a constituent part of the Kleinbürger mentality and which, when threatened in the economic and social crises of the late 1920s, were easily assimilated into National Socialist programmes.⁵¹

Enzensberger is not alone in perceiving the late 1970s onwards to be a period in which the Kleinbürger has once more come to dominate a society no longer striving on the whole for radical social reform and having abandoned utopian plans. The 'Renaissance der Spießer'⁵² is, for critics on the left, a confirmation of the return of a provincial conservatism under Kohl highly reminiscent of the 1950s with a general

⁴⁹ Enzensberger, 'Von der Unaufhaltsamkeit des Kleinbürgertums - Eine soziologische Grille', Politische Brosamen, p. 204. First published in 'Wir Kleinbürger', Kursbuch 45 1976, pp. 1-8.

⁵⁰ Berthold Franke, Die Kleinbürger: Begriff, Ideologie, Politik, Campus, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, p. 9.

⁵¹ See Franke, Die Kleinbürger, pp. 179f.

⁵² See Jürgen Stark, Renaissance der Spießer: Eine Abrechnung mit 15 Wendejahren, Verlag Die Werkstatt, Göttingen, 1995.

'Entpolitisierung' of society and a withdrawal to a blinkered focus on the private sphere of family, house and garden.⁵³ However, the maligned Kleinbürger becomes for Enzensberger the embodiment of an important anti-authoritarian, pragmatic politics.

The revaluation of the figure of the Kleinbürger comes even before the beginning of the 1980s, in an edition of Kursbuch devoted to the subject 'Wir Kleinbürger'.⁵⁴ Although several of the contributors seem uneasy in switching attention to such a dubious entity from their more customary essays on either the intellectual classes or the workers, Enzensberger's piece on the 'schwankende [...] störende Klasse' relishes his assertion that everyone (apart from those who live off accumulated capital) now belongs to the Kleinbürgertum. In documenting the 'Unaufhaltsamkeit des Kleinbürgertums', Enzensberger praises the strategies of ordinary people while reserving his critical attacks for the general positions adopted by those German intellectuals who imagine that they can enlighten the general public. Although some critics see a continued antagonism between Enzensberger and consumer society⁵⁵, this fails to take into account the number of passages in which Enzensberger shows extensive support for the Kleinbürger. It is more useful to see how he has turned his earlier view of German society almost upside down.

⁵³ See Stark, Renaissance der Spießer, pp. 7-12, Franke, 'Zur Kultur der Normalität', in Die Kleinbürger, pp. 214-18, and Matthias Horx, 'Warum die Normalität zur Sehnsucht gerät, welche Spießertypen die Bühne der Gegenwartskultur wieder betreten und warum der Individualismus im Moment seines Triumphes scheitern muß', Trendbuch, Econ Verlag, Düsseldorf, 1994 (2nd edition), pp. 118-31.

⁵⁴ 'Wir Kleinbürger', Kursbuch 45, 1976. Although recent editions of Kursbuch had focussed on overlapping themes such as 'Provinz', 'Alltag', and 'Unsere Bourgeoisie', the title of Kursbuch 45 goes even further in exploding the self-identification of its contributors as radical reformers.

⁵⁵ See Jürgen Haupt's contentious claim that 'die grundsätzliche Analyse Enzensbergers hat sich von seinen Anfängen bis heute im Kern nicht verändert. Vom Schaum-Haßgesang von 1960 über die Unaufhaltsamkeit des Kleinbürgertums von 1976 bis zu Mittelmaß und Wahn 1988 zieht sich eine Argumentationslinie durch. Das "exzessive Mittelmaß" holt offenbar so gut wie jede kritische, gar alternative Individualität ein: vor allem auch in der Mimikry des individuellen Scheins.' Haupt, 'Die Verteidigung des "Kuddelmuddels"', p. 141.

The Kleinbürger are still linked inextricably, for Enzensberger, with the fields of popular culture and consumption, but their role is seen now at least in part as a positive one in maintaining a dynamic, innovative society:

Im Konsum finden sich alle Züge des kleinbürgerlichen Sozialcharakters als verallgemeinerte wieder: Dynamik und Vereinzelung, Fortschritt als Flucht nach vorn, Formalismus und ständige Innovation, Überflüssigkeit und Abgrenzungsbedürfnis.⁵⁶

The Kleinbürger's contribution to society goes far beyond an ability to be responsive consumers, Enzensberger claims, as this group determines much of the general 'Sittenbild' of contemporary life:

Sie besorgt Innovation. Sie legt fest, was für schön und erstrebenswert gilt. Sie bestimmt, was gedacht wird. (Die herrschenden Gedanken sind nicht mehr die der Herrschenden, sondern die des Kleinbürgertums.) Sie erfindet Ideologien, Wissenschaften, Technologien. Sie diktiert, was Moral und Psychologie bedeuten. Sie entscheidet darüber, was im sogenannten Privatleben "läuft". Sie ist die einzige Klasse, die Kunst und Mode, Philosophie und Architektur, Kritik und Design erzeugt.⁵⁷

These innovatory attributes are clearly celebrated, as is the 'Beharrlichkeit' of the Kleinbürger, the ability, like the more successful characters in Der Untergang der Titanic, to adapt, to persevere despite the vagaries of the course of history. They have the ability to survive, when more lauded groups, who imagine themselves to be at the centre of the dynamics of history, whether the Großbürgertum⁵⁸, the intellectuals or the

⁵⁶ Enzensberger, 'Von der Unaufhaltsamkeit des Kleinbürgertums', p. 203.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Enzensberger's ironic respect for the Kleinbürger does not extend to the upper middle classes or Großbürgertum. See, for example, the poem 'Kurze Geschichte der Bourgeoisie', Die Furie des Verschwindens, pp. 30-31, and Enzensberger's discussion of his adaptation of

working classes, have seen their privileged positions crumble or their ideals and utopian projects falter. Jürgen Haupt argues that much of Enzensberger's defence of Kleinbürgertum rests on his desire to distance himself from his previous emotional and intellectual investment in causes which ended in disappointment: from the idealistic projects of the left which posit either a future utopia as the inevitable outcome of the course of history or which champion an emancipatory politics which will liberate the working class en masse. In his view,

[r]elativ gerechtfertigt, "verteidigt" wird die kleinbürgerliche Normalität, weil sie einen diffusen, hinhaltenden, aufsaugenden, letztlich sehr zähen und wirksamen Widerstand bietet gegen eine allmählich erkannte Gefahr: gegen die Gewaltsamkeit doktrinäer Veränderungsstrategien von links.⁵⁹

But Enzensberger's support for aspects of Kleinbürgertum goes beyond the wish to distance himself from the rigidity of the left and the authoritarian nature of some forms of emancipatory politics. His argument is as anthropological as it is political in his claims that the dynamic diversity of lifestyles and cultural niches adopted by the Kleinbürger offer the only chance of survival against an ill-defined but impending catastrophe.⁶⁰ Of course, the theme of survival and strategies for carrying on in the face of crisis or catastrophe occurs both in these essays and also in several longer poems. Survival is a key theme not only in Der Untergang der Titanic, but also in the long piece, 'Die Frösche von Bikini', in which the narrator notes with bitterness the absence

Molière's Misanthrope in Enzensberger, Molières Menschenfeind, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1979, pp. 65-71.

⁵⁹ Haupt, 'Die Verteidigung des "Kuddelmuddels"', p. 131.

⁶⁰ See Enzensberger, 'Das Ende der Konsequenz', Politische Brosamen, pp. 19-20, 'Eurozentrismus wider Willen', Politische Brosamen, p. 48 and 'Zur Verteidigung der Normalität', pp. 223-24. Enzensberger explains his obsession with catastrophe in terms of his personal biography as a child during National Socialism: 'Wenn nämlich jemand die Geschichte primär als Katastrophe erfahren hat, so wie das in meinem Fall war (ich war 1939 zehn Jahre alt und am Ende des Krieges war ich sechzehn), so wird einen eine solche Sehweise nicht mehr verlassen.' Kesting, 'Gespräch mit Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1979)', in Grimm (ed), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 119.

of utopias - they can only be felt 'wie das Messer im Rücken'.⁶¹ Despite the despair brought on by the awareness that utopian projects cannot be realised, out of the ruins of progress comes the sign that life goes on:

während die Frösche sich heiser schrien
in den Bombenkratern des Fortschritts,
wo der Regen neue Tümpel bildet,
naturwüchsig [...].⁶²

For Enzensberger, there are parallels between the frogs' survival on the islands after the devastation of nuclear testing and the tenacious perseverance of the Kleinbürger in contemporary society after the political catastrophes of the twentieth century, including the collapse of faith in radical politics.⁶³ This positive portrayal of a specific kind of Kleinbürgertum, the pragmatic focus on achieving exactly what is necessary to carry on with life without placing any faith in more ambitious goals, is understandable in the context of Enzensberger's post-utopian project, but it is inconsistent. If the so-called catastrophe is merely the recognition that a commitment to utopian politics carries a high risk of failure, then a dose of pragmatism might well be the answer for the intellectuals thus affected. However, if the disaster is of a more material kind, and this is sometimes hinted, then the narrow focus of the Kleinbürger can offer no wider perspective on how to avoid it. If the impending catastrophe is of an ecological nature, the devotion to consumption shown by the Kleinbürger is likely to speed it on its way. Despite the unsatisfactory nature of Enzensberger's exploration of strategies of survival, the Kleinbürger are viewed positively for their pragmatism and adaptability.

The imprecision of these strategies of survival is subsequently developed into a more

⁶¹ Enzensberger, 'Die Frösche von Bikini', Die Furie des Verschwindens, pp. 46-47.

⁶² Ibid., p. 47.

⁶³ Haupt sees the frogs as 'Symbol natürlicher, unausrottbarer Freiheitsrechte des Individuums', 'Die Verteidigung des "Kuddelmuddels"', p. 136.

defined position which sees the Kleinbürger, through the use of strategic silence, regression and persistence, offering valiant resistance, not only to the doctrines of the left and attempts to educate them 'for their own good' but also to the manipulative appeals of the media. Moreover, by clinging on to 'normal', (i.e. obstinately old-fashioned) practices in everyday life, they offer resistance to the increasing pace and pervasiveness of social modernisation.⁶⁴

The successful strategies adopted by the Kleinbürger can most clearly be seen in their relationship with those who imagine that they are steering society, the representatives of 'Macht' and of 'Geist', the politicians and the intellectuals. Enzensberger's populist support for the wisdom and specific knowledges of ordinary people⁶⁵, rather than for the traditional elites, is apparent in his claim that in a democratic society knowledge spreads from the bottom of society upwards rather than the other way around.⁶⁶ Hence ordinary people are not 'Konsumidioten' but ultimately the instigators of changes in policy. The Kleinbürger are seen by Enzensberger as wise and sophisticated voters, able to manipulate opinion polls and anything but 'entpolitisiert'. In his view, they have such a low opinion of political conduct in the Federal Republic that they distance themselves from the parties, only grouping together to put their weight behind certain key issues, normally to great effect.⁶⁷ Enzensberger's characterisation of German political culture leaves little doubt that the general public has a greater ability to influence social developments than the policy-makers in parliament:

⁶⁴ Enzensberger, 'Zur Verteidigung der Normalität', p. 223. This contradicts his earlier defence of the Kleinbürger for their dynamism and for their role in instituting change in contemporary society.

⁶⁵ See Enzensberger's investigation of the contemporary application of different knowledges in 'Über die Ignoranz', Mittelmaß und Wahn, pp. 9-22.

⁶⁶ Enzensberger, 'Brunnenvergiftung - Eine gehaltene Rede über das Wasserrecht und über verwandte Gegenstände', Mittelmaß und Wahn, p. 196.

⁶⁷ See Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 262, 'Kassensturz - Ein Bonner Memorandum', p. 133, and 'Das empfindliche Ungeheuer', pp. 229-34.

In Wirklichkeit sind die Leute in Bonn die Eingeschlossenen. Eine amüsante Folge davon ist, daß die politische Klasse die Gesellschaft für dumm und frech hält. Die Gesellschaft ist genau der umgekehrten Meinung. Die Frage, wer Recht hat, ist relativ leicht zu entscheiden [...] Die Gesellschaft ist eben nicht die Hammelherde, die der Politiker in ihr vermutet.⁶⁸

In Enzensberger's view, political power is no longer held solely by those in government or by political parties, and it no longer operates vertically, from top to bottom. Instead of society being divided into two distinct groups, the politicians and the people, the elected and the electorate, these categories have become much more complicated and flexible:

Heute stehen dem Staat alle möglichen Gruppen gegenüber, Minoritäten aller Art. "Bürgerinitiativen" in diesem Sinn sind nicht nur alte Organisationen wie die Gewerkschaften, die Kirchen, die Medien. Auch die Sportler sind hochorganisiert, die Homosexuellen, die Waffenhändler [...]. Sie können 10 000 Machtinstanzen in unserer Gesellschaft ausmachen. Das Resultat ist eine undurchsichtige Gemengelage. Genau das Gegenteil von einem Volk, das sich um seine Bonner Häuptlinge schart.⁶⁹

Although this might describe a popular politics based solely on the maintenance of a group's own interests⁷⁰, and consequently possibly highly selfish and exclusionary, it is still a political culture with a more diffuse location of power than that criticised by Enzensberger in the 1950s and 1960s. Instead of seeing in Kohl's Federal Republic a general depoliticisation of the public and a 'politische Verdrossenheit', Enzensberger's

⁶⁸ Enzensberger, 'Das empfindliche Ungeheuer', pp. 232, 243.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 231.

⁷⁰ Rolf Warnecke goes further, claiming that the 'Mündigkeit' described by Enzensberger in his statements on Transatlantik consists precisely 'nicht mehr darin, ein aufgeklärtes Bewußtsein zu entwickeln, sondern in der Fähigkeit, die eigenen Interessen zu wahren'. In Warnecke, 'Kurswechselparade eines Intellektuellen', p. 103.

depiction of political culture is highly positive. Although individual parties might not be popular, political activity takes place perhaps more than ever and on a much less formal, structured, dogmatic basis. Through popular action, political power is effectively decentralised and interest groups contribute, more than the parties, to the setting of the political agenda:

Der Kern heutiger Politik ist die Fähigkeit zur Selbstorganisation.[....] Jedes Interesse, auch das privateste, artikuliert sich politisch in organisierten Gruppen. Das beginnt bei den alltäglichen Sachen: Schulfragen, Mieterproblemen, Verkehrsregelungen.⁷¹

Not only do the Kleinbürger have the measure of the politicians, they are also compared favourably to those other 'Erziehungsdiktatoren'⁷², the intellectuals. This group is forced to face up to the fact that, in an increasingly complex society, its influence in supplying ideas according to which the country might be organised, is diminishing. Instead of reacting to his own findings with alarm and pessimism - after all, Enzensberger as a prolific writer personifies the intellectual in an age of diverse media - his tone remains cheerful. Just as political power no longer enjoys a single location in the hands of the politicians, so new ideas, concepts and solutions to problems might arise from equally diverse surroundings:

Wenn das Gehirn der Gesellschaft nicht mehr lokalisierbar ist, dann ist auch die intellektuelle Produktivität nicht mehr bei einer sozialen Untergruppe wie den Professoren, den Schriftstellern, den Intellektuellen zu lokalisieren.⁷³

Although Enzensberger denies that he is a populist⁷⁴, his position is notable for the

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 230.

⁷² Enzensberger, 'Zur Verteidigung der Normalität', p. 222.

⁷³ Enzensberger, 'Das empfindliche Ungeheuer', p. 237.

⁷⁴ See also Enzensberger's attempt to distance himself from a populist approach in 'Zur

respect it gives to the abilities of ordinary people over those of social elites:

Ich bin kein Populist und neige nicht dazu, mich bei einer Mehrheit anzubiedern, aber die Frage muß doch erlaubt sein: Wenn die Gesellschaft tatsächlich oft klüger ist als die Politiker, könnte sie dann nicht auch manchmal klüger sein als die Intellektuellen oder als der einzige Intellektuelle?⁷⁵

This position is maintained in Enzensberger's retelling of the history of the Federal Republic and his unrelenting criticism of the statements and positions adopted by intellectuals of both the left and the right. In contrast, he portrays sympathetically attempts by the Kleinbürger to rebuild west German society and its economy and to focus on everyday matters. The flow of ideas from ordinary people is helped enormously, according to Enzensberger, by the fact that education and culture are generally accessible and not restricted to the private inheritance of traditional elites.⁷⁶ Increased access to intellectual and cultural capital by ordinary people necessarily calls into question the claims of intellectuals that they alone understand society and can anticipate future developments.

In keeping with this is Enzensberger's reluctance to predict the future and to provide a blueprint for an improved society. The nearest he comes to proposing an alternative future for the Federal Republic is his warm description of the chaos of contemporary Italy, his 'Modell Italien', in which the appeal of 'ein unkalkulierbarer, produktiver, phantastischer Tumult' is set against the Germany inhabited by his less anarchic, less individualistic compatriots who

glauben immer noch an die Chimäre der Sicherheit, sie hängen immer noch einer

Verteidigung der Normalität', p. 216: 'Wenn es etwas Armseliges gibt als die Verachtung der Normalität, dann ist es ihre Anbetung. [...] Der Versuch, die Normalität zu glorifizieren, ist nicht nur ein logischer Nonsense, [...] es ist auch eine politische Lüge.'

⁷⁵ Enzensberger, 'Das empfindliche Ungeheuer', p. 237.

⁷⁶ Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 262.

Ordnung an, die vielleicht schon zum Anachronismus geworden ist.⁷⁷

Despite the attraction of Italy, which, for Enzensberger, embodies the triumph of the intransigence of ordinary people over the ability of the state to govern in an organised fashion, it is not proposed that this model, with all its 'Schattenseiten', be adopted by the Federal Republic.

In any case, the immediate future of the Federal Republic was determined by the largely unpredicted events in east Germany in 1989, which ultimately saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and national border, and the unification of both states. In retrospect, Enzensberger's support for the instincts of ordinary people over the utopian projects of the intellectuals seems prescient, given the irresistible tide of popular demands for German unity and the widespread rejection of the alternative third way, beyond both Soviet-style socialism and the capitalism of the West, proposed by intellectuals such as Christa Wolf, Christoph Hein and Stefan Heym. As Enzensberger had already claimed, the triumph of capitalism was so complete that any attempt to exist outside it was doomed to failure.⁷⁸ The status of intellectuals was thoroughly undermined by their failures in 1989 as they were left behind by the desires and 'die praktische Vernunft'⁷⁹ of ordinary people. The events leading to German unification seemed, for Enzensberger, to be living proof and clear justification of his defence of 'Normalität' and his respect for the everyday desires of the Kleinbürger:

denn was dabei zum Vorschein kommt, ist nicht die erhoffte Radikalität oder die ersehnte Tiefe, sondern die Gewöhnlichkeit. Es ist den Deutschen nicht um den geistigen Raum der Nation und nicht um die Idee des Sozialismus zu tun, sondern um Arbeit, Wohnung, Rente, Lohn, Umsatz, Steuern, Konsum,

⁷⁷ Enzensberger, 'Italienische Ausschweifungen, Ach Europa! Wahrnehmungen aus sieben Ländern, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, p. 117.

⁷⁸ Enzensberger, 'Milliarde aller Länder, vereinigt euch! Andeutungen über die Welt Bank und den Internationalen Währungsfonds', Mittelmaß und Wahn, p. 181.

⁷⁹ Enzensberger, 'Gangarten - Ein Nachtrag zur Utopie', Kursbuch, 100, 1990, p. 9.

Schmutz, Luft, Müll. Ganz normale, und das heißt konträre Interessen, Hintergedanken, Ängste, Komplexe und Konflikte machen sich Luft.⁸⁰

Enzensberger's support for 'people power' as the motor driving German unity underlines his commitment to the pragmatic politics of the Kleinbürgertum. Whereas the political complacency and narrow self-interest of the Kleinbürger was seen to be a potential threat to the emerging political democracy of the Federal Republic in the 1950s, at the beginning of the 1990s Enzensberger insists that the traditional intellectual and political classes in Germany should recognise that the new Kleinbürger is politically aware and committed to a more fluid version of democracy which is 'ein offener, produktiver, riskanter Prozeß'.⁸¹

III

Die gesamte Sphäre des Massenkonsums ist entscheidend von den Vorstellungen der kleinen Bourgeoisie geprägt. Markenartikel und Werbung sind Projektionen ihres Bewußtseins. [...] Es genügt, auf die Gestalt der beiden Konsumgüter hinzuweisen, die für unsere Zivilisation emblematisch sind: das Fernsehgerät und das private Automobil. Nur der Kleinbürger konnte diese bemerkenswerten Gegenstände ersinnen.⁸²

If, for Enzensberger, the television is the emblematic consumer good of a society dominated by the Kleinbürger, then it is entirely fitting that, in the middle of his series of essays on the 'Mittelmaß' of the contemporary Federal Republic, he should reconsider

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ 'Die Aussicht darauf, daß die Deutschen allmählich politisch erwachsen werden könnten, macht Politikern wie Intellektuellen offenbar schwer zu schaffen. Sie werden sich mit der banalen Tatsache abfinden müssen, daß die Demokratie ein offener, produktiver, riskanter Prozeß ist, der sich selbst organisiert und der sich, wenn nicht ihrem Einfluß, so doch ihrer Kontrolle entzieht.' Ibid., p. 10.

⁸² Enzensberger, 'Von der Unaufhaltsamkeit des Kleinbürgertums', p. 203.

this medium. His earlier essay on the subject of television had been groundbreaking in its optimism towards its political potential. His attempt to provide a useful socialist theory of the media had stressed the power to mobilise the general public inherent in the technology of the media in general, and television in particular, which was being misused by the government and state media institutions, committed as they were to upholding capitalism. Enzensberger's earlier media theory had consciously attacked ideas traditionally held by many critics on the German left, who could see little more than manipulative tendencies in the operations of the media; he accused them of being afraid, not of the media but really of the masses. Enzensberger's earlier media theory was marked by a democratic and populist aspect - the masses could and must gain access to the means of media production - and by an optimism concerning the possibility that messages transmitted through the media might be meaningful.

Given his recognition of the 'Mündigkeit' of the Kleinbürger in the 1980s and his respect for their pragmatic politics and rejection of party dogma, it might be expected that Enzensberger's updated media theory would celebrate the increasing tendency towards popular participation in the media through, for example, the expansion of home video technology and cable television networks which were key developments in 1980s society, and which arguably confirm his original thesis.⁸³ However, Enzensberger's revised media theory has very little to say about such tendencies, promoting instead a very different kind of theoretical understanding of television, one which notes with great irony the capacity of the Kleinbürger as viewer to refuse to use the medium as a means of information or communication. The form of populism which thus emerges is one in which the agency of the audience is celebrated, not in utilising the media to make meaning as in his earlier theory, but to refuse it.

⁸³ On these trends in German television culture see Claus Eurich and Gerd Würzburg, 'Die neue Potenz - Fernsehen und Video', in 30 Jahre Fernsehalltag: Wie das Fernsehen unser Leben verändert hat, Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1983, pp. 193-211, Claus Eurich, Das verkabelte Leben: Wem schaden und wem nützen die Neuen Medien, Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1983, and Marie-Luise Kiefer, 'Massenkommunikation 1964-1985: Trendanalyse zur Mediennutzung und Medienbewertung', in Michael Kunczik and Uwe Weber (eds), Fernsehen: Aspekte eines Mediums, Böhlau Verlag, Cologne, 1990, pp. 62-80.

Enzensberger's piece starts on familiar ground with a rejection of all media theories which are variations on the basic theme that 'Fernsehen verblödet'.⁸⁴ These variations include the thesis that viewers are manipulated by television, that they copy indiscriminately what they see on TV, that they can no longer distinguish between reality and its simulations⁸⁵, and that television has produced a new form of human being 'den man sich, je nach Belieben, als Zombie oder als Mutanten vorstellen kann'.⁸⁶ Enzensberger's dismissal of these theories is very much in line with his earlier populism regarding television: his faith in the powers of the public to resist ideological manipulation and also his optimism that general participation in the media and hence mass communication without distortion was eminently possible. Although there is little change in Enzensberger's optimism concerning the agency of the viewer, there is a considerable and crucial change in his attitude towards the actual use of television in everyday life. His essay no longer discusses the possibility of emancipatory communication through the channels of the medium because, in his view, the true nature of television is that it has the capacity to refuse any agenda, it does not have to communicate, but should be understood as a potential 'Nullmedium':

Neu an den neuen Medien ist die Tatsache, daß sie auf Programme nicht mehr angewiesen sind. Zu ihrer wahren Bestimmung kommen sie in dem Maß, in dem

⁸⁴ Enzensberger, 'Das Nullmedium oder Warum alle Klagen über das Fernsehen gegenstandslos sind', Mittelmaß und Wahn, pp. 89-92.

⁸⁵ Enzensberger revises his view of theories of simulation dramatically only five years later in his claim that perpetrators of violent actions in society are often in a 'Medientrance': 'Ihre Medientrance erklärt sich nicht aus Nachahmungseffekten, sondern aus der direkten Rückkopplung zwischen Abbildung und Wirklichkeit. Es gibt zahlreiche Täter, die das Gefühl haben, als seien sie "selbst" an ihren Handlungen eigentlich gar nicht mehr beteiligt. Es kommt ihnen so vor, als schlugen sie nicht wirklich andere tot, als sei das alles "nur Fernsehen". In der Unfähigkeit, zwischen Realität und Film zu unterscheiden, erfahren die Theorien der Simulation eine absurde Bestätigung.' Enzensberger, 'Haßkultur, Medientrance', Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg, pp. 69-70.

⁸⁶ Enzensberger, 'Das Nullmedium', p. 91.

sie sich dem Zustand des Nullmediums nähern.⁸⁷

Enzensberger argues that all media are subject to a process of evolution and that, at least initially, new media resemble and adopt the traits of the nearest existing medium.⁸⁸ For radio, and later also television, print culture provided many relevant concepts and sources of inspiration on how they might be used. Whereas written forms (despite the efforts of Dada on the one hand and the Bild-Zeitung⁸⁹ on the other) can never quite cease to communicate, to mean, Enzensberger suggests that it is precisely in this direction that television is developing so successfully.⁹⁰ Instead of lamenting the decline of television from a potentially emancipatory medium to a technology whose content is deliberately meaningless, most interested parties, including, it would initially appear, Enzensberger, seem not in the slightest upset. The television industry is only concerned with technical and financial questions, particularly concerning the size of the audience and the corresponding advertising revenue, and hardly raises the issue of the quality of what is transmitted. The Kleinbürger as viewer is fully complicit in this situation:

Dieser, keineswegs willenlos, steuert energisch einen Zustand an, den man nur als Programmlosigkeit bezeichnen kann. Um diesem Ziel näherzukommen, benutzt er virtuos alle verfügbaren Knöpfe seiner Fernbedienung.⁹¹

Enzensberger notes a series of 'kleine, aber einflußreiche Minderheiten' who still believe

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

⁸⁸ 'In deren Evolution gilt der Satz, daß jedes neue Medium sich zunächst an einem älteren orientiert, bevor es seine eigenen Möglichkeiten entdeckt und gewissermaßen zu sich selber kommt.' Ibid., p. 99.

⁸⁹ 'Nicht obwohl, sondern weil sie nichts bedeutet, ist die Bild-Zeitung unentbehrlich.' Enzensberger, 'Zur Verteidigung der Normalität', p. 223. See also Enzensberger, 'Der Triumph der Bild-Zeitung oder Die Katastrophe der Pressefreiheit', Mittelmaß und Wahn, pp. 74-88.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 94-97.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 93.

in the illusion that what is broadcast should be meaningful: the Grundgesetz legislates that programmes should inform, educate and entertain and offer a broad cultural range, politicians believe that television appearances can maintain their hold on power⁹², and educationalists and critical theorists also imagine that they

in den elektronischen Medien nach wie vor Produktivkräfte wittern, die es nur zu entfesseln gelte, um ungeahnte gesellschaftliche Lernprozesse in Gang zu setzen (eine frohe Botschaft, die man sich aus manchem alten Medien-Baukasten zusammenklauben kann).⁹³

As the ironic use of the phrase 'Medien-Baukasten' makes clear, Enzensberger's hypothesis that television is a 'Nullmedium' not only makes untenable emancipatory uses of the medium, it also highlights his awareness of the distance between this theory and his earlier position.⁹⁴

Enzensberger suggests that television's great capacity not to communicate has not yet made it entirely into the 'Nullmedium': a state of 'vollkommene Leere'⁹⁵ is immensely difficult to achieve as there is always 'ein minimales Signal, das Rauschen der Realität'⁹⁶, but it is not so much the technology as the social practices around television consumption which act to prevent communication. It is the television viewer who ensures that television does not mean, that there is no exchange of information:

Überhaupt der Zuschauer! Er weiß genau, womit er es zu tun hat. [...] Weit

⁹² Ibid., p. 98.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Although in several essays in Mittelmaß und Wahn Enzensberger discusses changes in his views, he does not go into any further detail on the significance of the 'Nullmedium' theory for his earlier 'Baukasten' essay.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 103.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

davon entfernt, sich manipulieren (erziehen, informieren, bilden, aufklären, mahnen) zu lassen, manipuliert er das Medium, um seine Wünsche durchzusetzen. Wer sich ihnen nicht fügt, wird per Tastendruck mit Liebesentzug bestraft, wer sie erfüllt, durch herrliche Quoten belohnt. Der Zuschauer ist sich völlig darüber im klaren, daß er es nicht mit einem Kommunikationsmittel zu tun hat, sondern mit einem Mittel zur Verweigerung von Kommunikation, und in dieser Überzeugung läßt er sich nicht erschüttern.⁹⁷

It is the emphasis placed on the agency of the viewer that characterises Enzensberger's 'Nullmedium' piece, placing it firmly within his more general populist commentary on the contemporary Federal Republic and marking its distance from theories of the media which see little more than the manipulation of the viewer.⁹⁸ There are clear parallels between the strategies of the active viewers who use a 'Geheimwaffe [...], das gefürchtete Zapping' to resist attempts to educate and enlighten them and the anti-authoritarian practices of the Kleinbürger who refuse to accept that politicians and intellectuals necessarily know better than they do how to run their lives. The members of the television audience are depicted as resourceful, discriminating and resilient in their viewing strategies⁹⁹, neither the victims of manipulation nor the 'Konsumidioten' suggested, according to Enzensberger, by much of the German left.

Despite these assertions, the agency of the Kleinbürger as viewer is so desperately limited - the active viewer's sole motivation is to reach a state of inactivity - that it is

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 100.

⁹⁸ See also Enzensberger, 'Über die Ignoranz', p. 21, where he mocks the 'Anhänger der Manipulationstheorien' who believe that viewers watch passively. He argues: 'Über die Tricks der Reklamefritzen und die Reden der Politiker kann Zizi nur lachen. Und was Dallas betrifft, sagt sie: "So ein Scheiß." Zu der Mühe, bedrohliche Mengen von Informationen aufzunehmen und zu speichern, kommt also noch die weit größere Anstrengung, sich ihre eigenen Kenntnisse vom Leib zu halten, sich gegen sie zu immunisieren.'

⁹⁹ The viewers are particularly discriminating when it comes to watching the statements of politicians. See, for example, Enzensberger, 'Wohnkampf. Eine Talkshow', Politische Brosamen, p. 141.

hard to refute Frank Blum's criticism that the mobile masses of Enzensberger's 'Baukasten' theory, the 'Tänzer' and 'Guerilleros'¹⁰⁰, have really become nothing more than 'couch potatoes'.¹⁰¹ All Enzensberger's assertions that television acts as a form of technical nirvana, a 'buddhistische Maschine'¹⁰², and that

[i]n der Nullstellung liegt also nicht die Schwäche, sondern die Stärke des Fernsehens. Sie macht seinen Gebrauchswert aus. Man schaltet das Gerät ein, um abzuschalten,¹⁰³

cannot disguise his dissatisfaction with his own hypothesis.¹⁰⁴ The populist tendency in his work in the 1980s which allowed him to promote the enlightened agency and pragmatic strategies of the Kleinbürger rather than the critical intelligence of theorists and intellectuals leaves him at a dead end when the Kleinbürger simply refuse to act in an enlightened fashion.

The pessimistic undertones which it is possible to detect behind the ironic and cheerful tone of this essay lead Blum to suggest that Enzensberger's media theory stands in close proximity to the cultural pessimism of Adorno, particularly to his assertion of the role that the culture industry plays in the deception of the masses.¹⁰⁵ However, the comparison can hardly be upheld, given Adorno's firm insistence on the manipulation of the masses and Enzensberger's attention to the agency, however narrow it might prove

¹⁰⁰ Enzensberger, 'Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien', p. 93.

¹⁰¹ Frank Blum, 'Baukasten und Nullmedium: Hans Magnus Enzensbergers medientheoretische Ansätze in Korrelation zur Medienpraxis im deutschsprachigen Raum', Maske und Kothurn, 1989 (32), 3/4, p. 90.

¹⁰² Enzensberger, 'Das Nullmedium', p. 102.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁰⁴ 'Ich kann im Zweifelsfall stets behaupten, ich sei schließlich kein Zombie, und es gebe dort, wo ich hinblicke, doch immerhin etwas zu sehen, dieses oder jenes Bestimmte, so etwas wie den glimmenden Rest eines Inhalts', *ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁵ Blum, 'Baukasten und Nullmedium', p. 89.

in practice, of the Kleinbürger. It is also maintained by Blum that Enzensberger's new theory is astonishing in the degree that it develops some of the ideas of Marshall McLuhan, which had been vehemently opposed in the 'Baukasten' essay. According to Blum, Enzensberger's claim that

jeglicher Inhalt und jegliche Bedeutung des Programms liquidiert werden, deckt sich exakt mit McLuhans berühmter Formel, das Medium sei die Botschaft, bzw. mit seinem Gleichnis vom elektrischen Licht, das zwar seine Berührungspunkte "erhellte", aber keinen "Inhalt" hat.¹⁰⁶

Although there is a clear parallel between McLuhan's statement that the technology of the media mean that the world is now essentially a 'global village', and Enzensberger's argument that the lack of content which he ascertains in broadcasting schedules is merely confirmed by the fact that the same programmes are sold and are popular with viewing audiences all over the world¹⁰⁷, Enzensberger's theory differs from McLuhan's in important respects. Whereas McLuhan's analysis rests on the fact that the technology of the media is all important in determining the way in which television, for example, can communicate nothing meaningful beyond the very fact that it exists, i.e. the medium is quite literally the message, the meaninglessness of Enzensberger's 'Nullmedium' comes not simply from the determining features of its technology, but is defined in the social practice of television consumption and is driven by the viewers' great refusal of meaningful content. This owes much to Enzensberger's general populism concerning the agency of the Kleinbürger in opposing all attempts from external sources of authority to educate and inform. In this way, the 'Nullmedium' thesis is a continuation of Enzensberger's sympathy with the Kleinbürger against 'Erziehungsdiktatoren' and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁰⁷ 'So erklärt sich auch eine Eigenschaft des Fernsehens, die unter jeder anderen Prämisse rätselhaft wäre: seine transkulturelle Reichweite. Ein und dieselbe Serie, ein und derselbe Video-Clip, ein und dieselbe Show entfaltet, unabhängig von allen gesellschaftlichen Voraussetzungen, die gleiche Anziehungskraft in Lüdenscheid, Hongkong und Mogadischu. So unabhängig von jedem Kontext, so unwiderstehlich, so universell kann kein Inhalt sein.' Enzensberger, 'Das Nullmedium', p. 101.

does not rest, as McLuhan's theory appears to, simply on the determining technology of the media.

In view of this general context, it is more profitable to compare Enzensberger's 'Nullmedium' essay to aspects of the work of someone who had been one of his fiercest critics, Jean Baudrillard. Although Enzensberger nowhere names Baudrillard in his essays, it seems reasonable to argue that there is a form of dialogue at work in their theories. This is beyond doubt on Baudrillard's side, as his well-known 'Requiem for the media', as discussed in Chapter Four, explicitly rejected both McLuhan's technological optimism and Enzensberger's avowal of democratic participation in the media elaborated in the 'Baukasten' piece. As if to return the favour, Enzensberger's 'Nullmedium' piece begins with a rejection of a number of media theories, including the thesis that viewers cannot distinguish between reality and simulation, whose principle proponent is, of course, Baudrillard.¹⁰⁸ Where their paths meet most interestingly is in the parallels between Enzensberger's 'Nullmedium' essay and Baudrillard's revised theory of the media, 'The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media'¹⁰⁹, which first appeared in 1985. Baudrillard's original position had been to oppose the optimism of Enzensberger by arguing pessimistically that the technology of television prevented a response and so could never be seen to be a medium of dialogue, of true communication. It could only offer a monologic form of information which alienated the masses. His revised position is one which he claims is 'no longer optimistic or pessimistic, but ironic and antagonistic'¹¹⁰:

I would no longer interpret in the same way the forced silence of the masses in the mass media. I would no longer see in it a sign of passivity and of alienation,

¹⁰⁸ See Baudrillard, 'Simulacra and Simulations', Selected Writings (edited and introduced by Mark Poster), Polity, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 166-184. This essay was originally published (in French) in 1981.

¹⁰⁹ Baudrillard, 'The Masses: the Implosion of the Social in the Media', Selected Writings, pp. 207-219.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

but to the contrary an original strategy, an original response to the form of a challenge.¹¹¹

What is at work here is, according to Baudrillard, the 'evil genius of the masses'.¹¹² The masses are not manipulated by the media at all, but refuse to respond to the messages sent out by the media, by politicians, by intellectuals, because, as part of an ironic strategy of deliberate irresponsibility, they realise that they can devolve making decisions and, ultimately, making meaning, to other people, those in power:

the masses are deeply aware that they do not have to make a decision about themselves and the world; that they do not have to wish; that they do not have to know; that they do not have to desire.¹¹³

In a passage which anticipates Enzensberger's essay to an uncanny degree, Baudrillard writes that the silence of the masses in the face of the media is actually part of a strategy of 'spontaneous, total resistance'¹¹⁴ to the demands made on them to participate in communication, in registering an opinion:

the present argument of the system is to maximise the production of meaning, of participation. And so the strategic resistance is that of the refusal of meaning and the refusal of speech [...]. It is the actual strategy of the masses.¹¹⁵

Although Baudrillard and Enzensberger agree that media consumption can be understood as part of a process by which the masses, in Baudrillard's words, or the

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 213.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 215.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 217.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 219.

viewers, in Enzensberger's, operate a strategic resistance to the attempts of people in power to inform, educate or to involve them in the making of meaning, their theories have very different implications. For Baudrillard, the strategy of the masses, as evidenced, for example, in the fluctuations and uncertainties, the very meaninglessness, of opinion poll results, is a deliberate attempt to contribute to the destruction of political and social reality and its replacement by 'the era of simulation'.¹¹⁶

Enzensberger's vision is ultimately much less cynical. The viewing public is fully aware of the use made by politicians of television, whose appearances have become meaningful not for any ideological message but purely for their nature as spectacle, as part of a ritual - 'sie senden Fernsehspots, deren einzige Botschaft darin besteht, daß hier ein Fernsehspot gesendet wird'¹¹⁷ - but this spectacle is of an increasingly peripheral nature.¹¹⁸ According to Enzensberger, the viewers are under no illusions that what politicians are communicating is anything more than a 'Null-Meldung'¹¹⁹ but the viewer's secret weapon, as always, is to reach for the remote control: 'Wer da nicht abschaltet, ist selber schuld'.¹²⁰ Unlike Baudrillard, Enzensberger does not deny the continuing existence of social and political reality beyond the realm of the media, a world to which the viewer as Kleinbürger appears to have continued access, a world outside the tautological statements of the professional politicians:

Die Bundesrepublik kann sich eine inkompetente Regierung leisten, weil es letzten Endes auf die Leute, die uns in der Tagesschau langweilen, gar nicht ankommt. Die realen gesellschaftlichen Prozesse verlaufen dem Bonner Zirkus

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

¹¹⁷ Enzensberger, 'Kassensturz - Ein Bonner Memorandum', p. 130.

¹¹⁸ Enzensberger, 'Macht und Geist: Ein deutsches Indianerspiel', Mittelmaß und Wahn, p. 215.

¹¹⁹ 'Ihre Botschaften sind tautologisch und leer. Sie sagen immer nur eines, nämlich "Ich bin ich" oder "Wir sind wir". Die Null-Meldung ist die bevorzugte Art ihrer Selbstdarstellung.' Enzensberger, 'Das empfindliche Ungeheuer', p. 233.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 240.

gegenüber weitgehend autonom.¹²¹

For Enzensberger, although television might be in the process of becoming the 'Nullmedium', with the result that it can no longer play a role in encouraging political emancipation and, ultimately, fully democratic communication, this is not necessarily cause for too much concern. Because democratic processes and the political 'Mündigkeit' of the Kleinbürger are already assured and operate outside the technology of the media, the viewers can afford the luxury of the 'Nullmedium'. The plebiscite of the Kleinbürger, the agenda set by the general public in the Federal Republic in the 1980s, has ensured that the medium is manipulated by the viewer, that the politicians and intellectuals respond to the dictates of the consumers, and not the other way around.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 228.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

For the happy few? Enzensberger's populist literary culture

I

In unserem Leben wimmelt es von Anachronismen [...] Zu den merkwürdigsten Erscheinungen dieser Art gehört zweifellos das Schreiben und das Lesen von Gedichten, und, a fortiori, jegliches Raisonnieren über diese Tätigkeiten.¹

The cultural populism evident in Enzensberger's essays on the Kleinbürger in the Federal Republic throughout the 1980s must also be considered in the light of his resurgent interest in literature and literary culture over this period. Although there is a gap of over a decade in which Enzensberger published no new volume of poetry, namely between Die Furie des Verschwindens in 1980 and Zukunftsmusik in 1991, followed by Kiosk in 1995, it would be incorrect to draw the conclusion that poetry and literature in general had ceased to be an important concern.² On the contrary, nearly a quarter of the length of Mittelmaß und Wahn, the collection on the political culture of the Federal Republic, is devoted to a series of essays on the broad questions of reading, education and the place of literature in contemporary society. Several essays discuss at length the status and role of literary culture in an era in which the dominant cultural form is the 'Nullmedium', television, and in which the position of literary intellectuals in society is in apparent crisis. In addition, Enzensberger's highly successful attempt to secure a niche in the book publishing market, Die andere Bibliothek, a series of reprints

¹ Enzensberger, 'Bescheidener Vorschlag zum Schutze der Jugend vor den Erzeugnissen der Poesie', Mittelmaß und Wahn, p. 23. (First published in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 11 September, 1976.)

² Enzensberger, Zukunftsmusik, and Kiosk, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1995. The publication of Enzensberger's collected poems, Die Gedichte, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1983, suggested that there would be no further volumes of poetry after Die Furie des Verschwindens in 1980.

and new commissions, began to appear in 1985. This project warrants careful examination, as Enzensberger's work as a publisher and editor has always been a significant indicator of the exact nature of his cultural-political interests at any given time. The importance of literary culture to Enzensberger in the mid-1980s was emphasised when he assumed the pseudonym Andreas Thalmayer to argue at length for the pleasures of reading poetry in Die Wasserzeichen der Poesie.³

Importantly, this return to literature complements rather than contradicts the cultural populism and support for the Kleinbürger. In his essays, Enzensberger repeatedly argues against the use of literature to educate and enlighten the population, promoting instead the idea that readers should be free to seek out the pleasures of the text in their own way. There is no sustained attempt, as might be expected in this lengthy exploration of the place of print culture in contemporary society, to secure a role for literature as a medium capable of challenging the emptiness of the 'Nullmedium' culture of television. This democratic impulse is maintained in Die Wasserzeichen der Poesie, which demonstrates both the various skills at work in the construction of a poem and allows its readers to (re)discover the joys of different poetic forms. Even the project to publish the series Die andere Bibliothek draws in unexpected ways on Enzensberger's cultural populism. An exercise which on the surface might seem to repeat the Prachtexemplare literary culture of the bourgeoisie in the late nineteenth century turns out to offer high quality editions of forgotten treasures and interesting new works to discerning consumers at notably affordable prices. These diverse strands come together to form a clear thread in Enzensberger's work in the 1980s and early 1990s: what is being attempted is not a return to an arguably elitist literary culture in which a vanguard of intellectuals writes to educate the masses. Instead, Enzensberger is seeking to give structure to a more democratic and populist project, namely to make available and to distribute widely a variety of literary texts on the principle that the pleasures of reading should be accessible to all who desire them. There is no attempt to maintain the project

³ Andreas Thalmayer, Die Wasserzeichen der Poesie, Die andere Bibliothek (9), Greno Verlag, Nördlingen, 1985.

project of Enlightenment by dictating to the public that reading is morally or politically worthwhile. Instead, Enzensberger recognises that the book-buying public consists of consumers who do not need to be educated or enlightened as much as entertained.

II

In a period in which the rapid domestic adoption of advances in audiovisual technology, from cable and satellite television to digital media systems, appears to be ending the previously dominant position of print culture, it is no surprise to see the subject of the crisis of literary culture taken up by writers.⁴ Literature's 'crisis' has been a theme of Enzensberger's writing from his editorship of the Museum der modernen Poesie, which suggested the exhaustion of modernist avant-garde poetry, to the infamous essay in Kursbuch 15 on the 'death' of literature's claims to political significance. The question of whether and in what form literature can survive the 'crisis' of competition from other media is taken up in a number of places by Enzensberger, who is optimistic about its chances, despite, or perhaps even because of, its anachronistic status. In his recent poem, 'Altes Medium', Enzensberger argues that although he expects many people to want to enjoy the more sophisticated technological experiences associated with audiovisual media than can be provided by mere letters on a page -

Sechszwanzig
dieser schwarz-weißen Tänzer,
ganz ohne Graphik-Display
und CD-ROM,
als Hardware ein Bleistiftstummel -

⁴ See John Walsh, 'Have we reached the end of the book?', The Independent (Weekend), 27 April 1996, p. 9, and Salman Rushdie, 'The novel is not dead. It's just buried', The Observer (Review), 18 August 1996, p. 15. Walsh notes the importance of Sven Birkerts, The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age, Faber, London, 1994, for an overview of these debates.

das ist alles.⁵

- he argues that the simple technology of paper and pencil can, through the lightness of the 'dancing' letters, a recurrent image in recent poems by Enzensberger, escape from the drab weight of much everyday experience to open up imaginative worlds far beyond the creativity of computers. The language of poetry, when held up against computer-simulated packages, offers a richer imaginative experience:

Aber wem es wirklich ernst ist
mit virtual reality,
sagen wir mal:
Füllest wieder Busch und Tal,
oder: Einsamer nie
als im August, oder auch:
Die Nacht schwingt ihre Fahn,
der kommt mit wenig aus.⁶

In his argument for the imaginative power of poetry, Enzensberger ends his poem on an almost apologetic note, excusing his continued interest in writing - 'Manche verlernen es nie' - in case he has disturbed anyone by his advocacy of the old medium.

His essays, in contrast, are less defensive and more cheerful on the role of literary culture in contemporary society. Despite the incredible success and expansion of newer media, Enzensberger is adamant that the book itself is flourishing. At a purely economic level, there is little evidence that the market for books has suffered at all through the growth in alternative media:

We are talking about one of the last businesses that still seems to grow

⁵ Enzensberger, 'Altes Medium', Kiosk, p. 97.

⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

irresistibly. The number of editions and the sales figures are increasing, the book fair in Frankfurt is growing year after year and so is the book week in Amsterdam. Corporations are getting fatter and fatter, the addressed public broader and broader, and the cash flow better and better.⁷

This all seems bright for the printed word, but, on closer analysis, Enzensberger shows how these figures refer simply to 'the book' as medium and in so doing disguise the fact that the publishing industry relies so heavily on the continued success of Sachbücher because of their use value. When it comes to a discussion of 'das andere Buch', the work of fiction or the volume of poetry, it is clear that in economic terms its future is less secure. However, Enzensberger doubts its possible extinction because, in the last resort, it is a particularly simple medium to produce and circulate, and therefore stubbornly refuses to be stamped out, controlled or to become obsolete. The rudimentary nature of the book as a medium will ensure its survival in direct proportion to the increasingly technological nature of society's cultural consumption and consequent overload of information:

In the worst case the prospects of the book are based on its being a low-cost and old-fashioned medium. As far as I am concerned, I am convinced that this anachronism is heading towards a great future.⁸

Enzensberger's case draws on a cheerful pragmatism, an understanding of the stubbornness of certain simple phenomena in surviving over lengthy periods of time while other more complex forms rise and fade. Significantly, he does not argue for the moral or political necessity of 'the other book', merely noting like an anthropologist at some remove that its survival chances are good. He takes care to make his points without recourse to claims of the ideological importance of print as a medium, as has

⁷ Enzensberger, 'The Virtues of the Needle and the Other Book', Discourse, 2, 1980, pp. 53-54.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

often been the case:

The other book always had to carry all kinds of ideological freight; it is not surprising that the book itself as an institution had been ideologized in every possible way. [...] The book as a weapon or as a culinary alibi, as eternal light of the enlightenment or as opium for the people, as cultural grail or as dangerous explosive: all these are stylizations which we have to avoid if we want to speculate about a possible future of the book.⁹

It is misleading to suggest that Enzensberger's belief in the future viability of the book is based on his acceptance of the continued vitality of Enlightenment traditions.¹⁰ His optimism regarding the book's chances of survival are more anthropological than ideological, and there are numerous instances in his broader discussion of literary culture in general, rather than simply of the book as a medium, which show a reluctance to position himself within the project of Enlightenment.

Although the book is not immediately threatened by the technology of the newer audiovisual media, Enzensberger argues that it is exposed to the dangers of technology in another way. In his essay on 'Das Brot und die Schrift. Ein vorläufiger Nachruf', he laments the decline in the arts of printing and type-setting as a result of technological 'progress'.¹¹ Whereas he views the growth of the audiovisual media with detachment, Enzensberger becomes passionate in articulating the extent to which the quality of the printed page is put in jeopardy by newer publishing procedures:

⁹ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁰ Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit quote the phrase 'ewige[s] Lämplein der Aufklärung' as if this is Enzensberger's present view, rather than one tradition of thinking about literary culture which he is reluctant to use for his defence of the book. See Dietschreit, and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 142.

¹¹ Enzensberger, 'Das Brot und die Schrift. Ein vorläufiger Nachruf', Spectaculum, 39, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1984, pp. 247-250.

Unter dem Druck von Akkord und Rationalisierung werden Ligaturen abgeschafft oder vernachlässigt. Die Buchstabenabstände unterliegen absurden Schwankungen. Da im Fotosatz kein Typenkörper mehr existiert, wird der Lauf der Schrift beliebig manipulierbar; die Buchstaben werden, besonders im Akzidenz- und Titel-, aber auch im Fließsatz, aneinandergeklebt oder auseinandergerissen. Umbrochen wird oft ohne Rücksicht auf überhängende Zeilen. Immer häufiger findet man auf halbleeren Seiten die am unteren Rand verloren schwimmende Pagina. Abschnitte, Leerzeilen, Senkungen lassen in vielen Publikationen den Verdacht aufkommen, sie seien aus einer Blindenanstalt hervorgegangen.¹²

He speaks here as a consumer of the written word, as someone concerned about the quality of printed material from the perspective of the reader rather than about the ideological nature of what has been printed. This notion of the reader as consumer is reinforced in his comparison of the decline of the art of printing with that of bread making: 'Brot und Schrift sind elementare Bedürfnisse, auf die wir nicht verzichten können'.¹³ Behind each new stage in the rationalisation of both printing and baking, Enzensberger sees a shared logic, 'die Zerstörung der Sinnlichkeit'. This is accompanied by a split in the market between huge concerns using the latest industrial processes to produce goods, be they books or bread rolls, as cheaply as possible but of poor quality, and small firms with more traditional production processes which maintain quality for the consumer but at considerable expense.

Although Enzensberger equates properly printed material with decent bread as elementary goods to which everyone has a right, his apparent anti-elitism and populist defence of consumer rights is still tinged with elements of paternalist snobbery. The obsessive concern with the quality of paper and with the selection of the appropriate typeface might seem a long way both from his call for his earliest poems to be scratched

¹² Ibid., p. 249.

¹³ Ibid., p. 248.

into walls and to appear on advertising hoardings as a way of reaching the public, and from his attempts to question the aura of the written word in his essay, 'Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien'. Nevertheless, Enzensberger's ultra-materialist comparison of reading with bread consumption can also be seen as part of a populist project. He laments the likely future for decently printed books because they seem set to become affordable only for a minority of readers:

Das Lebensnotwendige rückt immer ferner und wird zum Privileg, das nur für den erreichbar ist, der einen exorbitanten Preis dafür zahlen kann. [...] Brot und Schrift, ein Glas frischer Milch, eine gut gesetzte und gedruckte Seite, das wird es vielleicht auch noch in zwanzig Jahren geben, als Luxusgut FOR THE HAPPY FEW.¹⁴

For those consumers who cannot afford them, these basic requirements will be out of reach. Enzensberger argues passionately against allowing the 'Sinnlichkeit' of everyday experience, whether in the form of decent milk, bread rolls or a printed page, to become luxury items which can only be consumed by an elite with sufficient economic capital. This argument makes much of the concern to secure popular access to the 'Sinnlichkeit' of the text whilst saying very little about the meaning, or 'Sinn', of the text in question. The threat to an accessible literary culture comes from economic quarters: it is the processes of industrial rationalisation which Enzensberger sees as inimical to a popular culture of reading. Only those with sufficient economic capital will form an elite of readers who can afford printed material of any quality. Literature is not seen as being under nearly as much threat from changes in cultural capital: the dominance of the 'Nullmedium', television, with the accompanying loss of meaning in cultural exchanges, of 'Sinn', is not considered with anything like this passion. The threat to the printed word comes in the form of the loss in literary culture of popular accessibility to 'Sinnlichkeit', to the sensuality and pleasures of reading, rather than through any deterioration in the 'Sinn' of contemporary cultural forms.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 250.

III

As Rolf Warnecke has argued, it is the 'Sinnlichkeit' of literary production rather than the 'Sinn' of the text that is at the heart of Enzensberger's attempt to set up the book publishing venture, Die andere Bibliothek.¹⁵ This project was motivated by the desire to intervene in the practices of the book trade to counter the decline of the quality of printed material: 'Die Produkte würden - gerade was ihre Verpackung und Vermarktung angeht - immer uniformer'.¹⁶ Consequently, Enzensberger's venture was driven, at least on the surface, by a consumerist ethic rather than one drawn from Enlightenment traditions. The 'Sinnlichkeit' of Enzensberger's project was stressed in publicity material produced in advance of Die andere Bibliothek. Attention was drawn to the materiality of the books at a time when so much information was being communicated abstractly through electronic media (again, this argument, it was emphasised, was no attack on the omnipresence of computers and databanks).¹⁷ Moreover, repeated reference was made to the chosen methods of production, from the selection of paper and typefaces to the printing technology used by Enzensberger's collaborator, Franz Greno.¹⁸

¹⁵ Warnecke, 'Kurswechselfarade eines Intellektuellen', pp. 99-100.

¹⁶ Dietschreit und Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 143.

¹⁷ 'Wir haben nichts gegen Datenbanken. Wir halten den Computer in Ehren. Die Neuen Medien betrachten wir mit zerstreutem Interesse. [...] Aber gerade in der Verkabelung der Branche sehen wir unsere Chance. Denn je abstrakter und gleichgültiger die Zeichen, die auf den Bildschirm erscheinen, desto stärker wird das Bedürfnis, das, was wir wissen wollen, in die Hand zu nehmen, um es zu begreifen und festzuhalten. Vielleicht sind wir nicht die einzigen, die eigensinnig genug sind, den Charme und Gebrauchswert einer Erfindung zu schätzen, die vor fünfhundert Jahren gemacht wurde.' Quoted in Jochen Vogt, 'Buch und Wein. Vom diskreten Charme einer ANDEREN BIBLIOTHEK', Text und Kritik, 49, 1985 (2nd edition), p. 105.

¹⁸ See Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 143, and Der Spiegel, 'Schönes Spiel', 1984, 49, pp. 211-215.

As befits 'ein intimer Kenner des Marktes und seiner Lücken',¹⁹ Enzensberger's new venture not only identified a niche in the publishing industry but was successful in exploiting it. Much of the groundwork for this was achieved in a series of publicity brochures on display at bookshops, a marketing strategy that drew attention both to the quality of writing on offer and to the material quality of the books. Enzensberger and Greno made clear that Die andere Bibliothek should be understood as a series of distinctive publications, with a new title, chosen and edited by Enzensberger, appearing each month at a fixed price of DM25. Consumers could be sure that although they would be ordering books bought unseen, Enzensberger's literary experience and connoisseurship would guarantee their reading satisfaction. The commissioning principle on which Greno and Enzensberger were working, a kind of programmatic refusal to be bound to any particular programme, followed securely in the eclectic tradition of Kursbuch and Transatlantik. It was based squarely on the pleasures of the text rather than on the rigorous promotion of books which would either educate or which would allow readers to claim sociocultural esteem through their purchases. 'Wir drucken nur Bücher, die wir selber lesen möchten'²⁰ was the advance statement issued by the pair. This was expanded into the desire to always publish a book 'das uns gefällt, [...] uns etwas angeht, [...] uns unterhält', and, beyond the simple pleasures of reading, a book which we 'brauchen können'.²¹ Much was made of the autonomy of the project and of its independent standing outside the mainstream of the book trade and therefore, it was claimed, its imperviousness to whatever might be flavour of the month in the publishing world. These elements all belonged to a complex marketing campaign which established Die andere Bibliothek as both elitist - independent, discerning, limited print runs, commissioning based on the connoisseurship of the expert - and yet, at the same time, as populist - the (relatively) low price and the appeal to the pleasures of reading.

¹⁹ Vogt, 'Buch und Wein', p. 104.

²⁰ Quoted in Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 144.

²¹ Ibid.

Although new works were envisaged, the majority of early publications in Die andere Bibliothek were reprints on the grounds

daß die meisten guten Schriftsteller schon lange tot und die meisten guten Bücher schon einmal gedruckt worden sind. Man hat sie nur vergessen.²²

Although this argument might appear conservative, the series did not simply reissue canonical works from the most celebrated authors. Instead, it attempted to select widely across genres and from diverse literary cultures to produce what has been termed both an 'Archäologie der Weltliteratur'²³ and the fulfillment of Enzensberger's vision of 'eines imaginären Museums der Weltliteratur'.²⁴ The range of titles reflected the breadth of Enzensberger's literary interests and showed the continuity of certain themes which had concerned him since his earliest publications. The first half-dozen titles, which appeared in 1985, were anything but conservative, either in form, as Enzensberger's aim to include not just literary prose but 'auch Briefe, Märchen, Wissenschafts-Reports oder Gerichts-Dokumente'²⁵ was put into practice, or in content, as the first publications included satirical political and social criticism, travel reportage and the memoirs of a terrorist.

Nevertheless, several critics noted the project's bourgeois, even elitist, nature. Enzensberger was accused of a 'Rückzug ins vermeintlich Exklusive'²⁶ and of 'einen gewissen Hang zum Luxus'²⁷ but these appraisals fail to take into account the dialectical

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., p. 146.

²⁴ Vogt, 'Buch und Wein', p. 108.

²⁵ See Der Spiegel, 'Schönes Spiel', p. 211.

²⁶ Vogt, 'Buch und Wein', p. 108.

²⁷ This accusation was attributed to Enzensberger's brother, Martin, a qualified typesetter. See Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 143.

nature of Die andere Bibliothek. It succeeded in a complex balancing act as it was able simultaneously to pander to bourgeois tastes for luxury and exclusivity whilst also adhering to more populist principles by allowing general accessibility to the books through very competitive pricing. The conspicuous consumption that was prevalent in many ways in the 1980s was reflected in the marketing of the series. Advertising material drew attention to the quality of paper and print, as noted above, but also marketed the books as exclusive collector's items:

Die Original-Buchdruckausgaben der ANDEREN BIBLIOTHEK sind limitiert. Bei Erscheinen des Bandes wird der Originalsatz aus Metall-Lettern eingeschmolzen. Ein Nachdruck im Buchdruck ist also nicht mehr möglich.²⁸

The exclusive end of the market was catered for with a limited luxury edition costing three times the price of the ordinary hardback volume. For the higher price, though, the purchaser received a copy printed on the finest handmade paper, in a marbled leather slipcase imprinted, if so desired, with the owner's name.²⁹ As might be expected, the marketing of these exquisitely designed books was aimed at the discerning wealthy consumer as the books were photographed in several brochures, to the amusement of Philip Brady,

among glasses, antiques and other embodiments of the good life and include[d] an order-form for Bordeaux, obtainable through a book-shop.³⁰

The selling of books alongside Bordeaux appears to signal changes in the nature of Germany's reading culture, whose motto might well now read 'Laßt uns lesen, was

²⁸ See the 'Prospekt der ANDEREN BIBLIOTHEK', the brochure advertising forthcoming publications. Edition used is from September 1992, p. 1.

²⁹ See Vogt, 'Buch und Wein', p. 106.

³⁰ Brady, 'Watermarks on the Titanic', p. 16, n. 24.

kommt - solange wir wissen, was es dabei zu trinken gibt'.³¹ In this aspect, Die andere Bibliothek appears to belong fully to the moment in the mid-1980s when, as Jochen Vogt noted, there seemed to be a sudden resurgence of interest among certain, wealthier, consumers for extremely expensive luxury editions of the classics of German literature.³² Vogt suggests that it is difficult to analyse whether these editions were bought because of their literary credentials or because they had a certain rarity value for snobbish investors.³³ The impressive sales figures of such publications appear less positive if they reflect not the expansion of a flourishing Lesekultur but merely the establishment of an expensive library 'for the happy few' who are able to lay down rare books like wine. It is tempting to see Die andere Bibliothek as belonging fully to this moment in luxury publishing in the 1980s, particularly given the nature of some of the advertising material and the speed with which many volumes went out of print and so increased in value.

If this were all there was to Enzensberger's project, then he would be contributing to the acceleration of the scenario, lamented in 'Das Buch und die Schrift', of quality literature being produced only for a wealthy minority audience. However, Enzensberger aimed not only to save forgotten works from the history of literature but also to appeal to less wealthy readers and to forge a sustainable Lesekultur. In early publicity material and in interviews, it was noted repeatedly that the books would be affordable to the general public. The main aim, it was declared, was to provide 'Bücher, die billig,

³¹ Vogt, 'Buch und Wein', p. 108.

³² 'Was schon fast verdorrt schien, unser klassisches Literaturerbe, scheint in besonderer Blüte zu stehen. Da offeriert beispielsweise eine >Liebhaber-Edition< fünfzig Werke der Weltliteratur zur postalischen Bestellung; zwar ist aus dem Prospekt nicht mit Sicherheit zu entnehmen, welche Werke es denn sein werden; aber was tut's - an der handwerklichen Gediegenheit von Bindung (eine Vielzahl feinsten Ledersorten mit dekorativen Verzierungen aus 22karätigem Gold), von Druck und Papier kann kein Zweifel sein. Und auch ein elegantes Lesezeichen fehlt nicht, kurzum: in jeder Beziehung ein Erbstück, an dem noch Generationen ihre Freude haben werden.' Vogt, 'Buch und Wein', p. 103.

³³ Ibid., p. 104.

anspruchsvoll und vor allem 'schön' sind'.³⁴ Much was made of Greno's track record and reputation as a publisher who produced editions of classic works at astonishingly cheap prices through cost-cutting measures.³⁵ In essence, the route to a new, wider reading public, and hence to a non-elitist Lesekultur, was seen by Greno and Enzensberger as 'gut gestaltete Bücher für wenig Geld'.³⁶ In practice, it could be argued that the rich were forced to subsidise the poor. The appeal to the conspicuous consumer prepared to pay DM 98 for the leather-bound edition (the same price, incidentally, as the six bottles of Bordeaux) had clear democratic benefits. These prices brought down the cost of the standard edition, securing the availability of Die andere Bibliothek to a larger group of readers than the 'happy few'. The sales figures suggest that Enzensberger and Greno succeeded in reaching beyond a small group of wealthy collectors: the initial print run for new titles was immediately increased from 3000 to 12000, apparently justifying the complex marketing strategies.³⁷

IV

The kind of Lesekultur preferred by Enzensberger is described in several essays in Mittelmaß und Wahn. They provide evidence that Enzensberger's commitment to literature is based, as argued above, on a complex kind of populism. He criticises the institutionalisation of literature in any form, particularly as part of a system for educating the young³⁸, and gives his blessing instead to the 'anarchy' of reading, in

³⁴ Der Spiegel, 'Schönes Spiel', p. 211.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215, and Vogt, 'Buch und Wein', p. 104.

³⁶ Der Spiegel, 'Schönes Spiel', p. 214.

³⁷ See Dietschreit and Heinze-Dietschreit, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, p. 147.

³⁸ Enzensberger's rejection of conventional systems of education finds its clearest expression in his 'Plädoyer für den Hauslehrer. Ein bißchen Bildungspolitik', Politische Brosamen, pp. 161-176, where he describes schools as 'ein Ort der Unterdrückung' and suggests, echoing Foucault's analysis, that 'sie, wie Irrenhäuser und Fürsorgeknäste, zur Aufbewahrung und zur Disziplinierung von Menschen errichtet worden sind', p. 165.

which the consumption of a literary text is marked by the reader's pleasure rather than by a compulsion to provide the correct interpretation. There are no explicit claims for the moral or political value of literature and no appeal for its readership to become enlightened. On the contrary, in several places Enzensberger provocatively defends illiteracy as 'a vital reflex serving as a form of self-preservation'.³⁹ It is this separation of the pleasures of reading from any necessity on the part of the general public to be educated, enlightened or informed which makes Enzensberger's literary populism so complex and controversial.

Enzensberger's 'Bescheidener Vorschlag zum Schutze der Jugend vor den Erzeugnissen der Poesie', intriguing though the title is, is also, in the light of his subsequent argument, misleading. Young people clearly do not require any protection from poetry, but rather from an educational system which insists on the interpretation of poetic texts as one of its methods of categorising pupil performance. Yet this essay is more than simply the first in a line of attacks on the disciplinary mechanisms of the Federal Republic's education system.⁴⁰ It contains Enzensberger's reckoning with the project of being a 'political' or 'engaged' poet and sketches out a populist position on reading and interpretation which feeds into his later essays. The significance of this essay for Enzensberger's populist literary culture, one of his central themes in the 1980s and 1990s, explains why, although it was originally published in 1976, it resurfaces over a decade later as one of the introductory essays in Mittelmaß und Wahn.

Despite the implications of his title, Enzensberger refutes the idea that poetry is dangerous today and not only because the circulation of poetry volumes is so tiny. He rejects all literary theories which claim more for literature than it delivers. He denies

³⁹ Enzensberger, 'The Virtues of the Needle', p. 56.

⁴⁰ See also Enzensberger's attack on the discipline of Germanistik: 'Auf diese Weise ist ein geschlossener Kreislauf von Produktion, Vertrieb, Lektüre, Kommentar und Interpretation entstanden, eine sekundäre Öffentlichkeit, die den Vorzug hat, daß sie von allen Launen und Wünschen des Publikums unabhängig, institutionell gesichert und dauerhaft subventioniert ist'. Enzensberger, 'Rezensenten-Dämmerung', Mittelmaß und Wahn, p. 57.

both the utopian view that poetry is dangerous as it contains a hidden, subversive potential behind an apparent aesthetic harmlessness and the opposite view that poetry is harmful precisely because it is elitist and parasitical and paralyses revolutionary energies.⁴¹ On the contrary, he is dismissive about the social effects of poetry:

Über die Wirkungen der Poesie lassen sich aber mit solchen Mitteln überhaupt nicht keine sinnvollen Aussagen machen. Das ist auch gar nicht nötig, denn diese Wirkungen sind im gesellschaftlichen Maßstab mikroskopisch.⁴²

The only way in which poetry becomes dangerous, according to Enzensberger, is when it is used in schools to force pupils to deliver a standard interpretation of the selected text. Drawing heavily on Susan Sontag's famous attack on hermeneutics, Against Interpretation⁴³, Enzensberger advocates a 'freie Lektüre'⁴⁴, where readers are allowed imaginative rein and are not forced to conform to an authoritarian 'correct' interpretation. This argument supports Enzensberger's populism concerning the act of reading:

Wenn zehn Leute einen literarischen Text lesen, kommt es zu zehn verschiedenen Lektüren. Das weiß doch jeder. In den Akt des Lesens gehen zahllos viele Faktoren ein, die vollkommen unkontrollierbar sind: die soziale und psychische Geschichte des Lesers, seine Erwartungen und Interessen, seine augenblickliche Verfassung, die Situation, in der er liest - Faktoren, die nicht nur absolut legitim und daher ernstzunehmen, sondern überhaupt die Voraussetzung dafür sind, daß so etwas wie Lektüre zustande kommen kann.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Enzensberger, 'Bescheidener Vorschlag', pp. 24-25.

⁴² Ibid., p. 26.

⁴³ Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation, and other essays, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1967.

⁴⁴ Enzensberger, 'Bescheidener Vorschlag', p. 35.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

It is in this context that Enzensberger's statement, 'Die Lektüre ist ein anarchischer Akt'⁴⁶, is situated. Reading is a dynamic, creative practice which is dependent above all on the specific relationship between a text and an individual reader. Furthermore, it is suggested that each act of reading is unique, given its dependence on so many variables. Not only is this argument democratic, in that Enzensberger implies that an enormous range of interpretations therefore arises, it is also populist in its refusal to disallow any interpretation or to impose a hierarchy on understanding the text. Reading is 'anarchic' - he is unwilling to impose any higher authority, not even in the figure of the writer, who can guarantee the correctness of any interpretation.

The sense of optimism which accompanies Enzensberger's advocacy of 'freie Lektüre' is also present in his related analysis of the state of literary culture. In answer to resurgent anxieties over a supposed 'Krise der Literatur'⁴⁷, Enzensberger argues that the institutional status that literature has occupied needs to be considered separately from an examination of what literature actually does. He admits that literature as an institutional form, composed of all those discourses around literature in newspapers and journals, and of the sociological status of writers, critics and professors of literature, has been forced to cede ground (although he does not say whether to TV, to other media, to boredom, to lack of interest). However, the specific competence which literature has historically enjoyed, namely 'neue Gefühle und Wahrnehmungen zu erfinden und herzustellen'⁴⁸, has now been dispersed and is found in many places in society:

Überall macht sich die Poesie breit, in den Schlagzeilen, in der Pop-Musik, in der Reklame; daß ihre Qualität zu wünschen übrigläßt, tut nichts zur Sache. Unvertraute Gefühle, neue Wahrnehmungsformen werden im Kino erfunden, in

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁷ Enzensberger, 'Literatur als Institution oder Der Alka-Seltzer Effekt', Mittelmaß und Wahn, pp. 47-48.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

allen möglichen Therapien, in der Mode, in der Musik, in der politischen Aktion, in Sekten und Subkulturen, in dem aberwitzigen Spektakel, das die Straßen unserer Metropolen bieten.⁴⁹

Although literature in its traditional, purest form still remains, much reduced but as insoluble, in Enzensberger's image, as the last grains of an aspirin in water, its general attributes are to be found throughout contemporary society. Enzensberger claims confidently that literature

ist nicht am Ende; sie ist überall. Die Sozialisierung der Literatur hat die Literarisierung der Gesellschaft mit sich gebracht.⁵⁰

One of the visible effects of this socialisation of literature can be found in the decline in status of the specialist literary critic and the corresponding growth - 'nie zuvor in der Geschichte sei so vieles von so vielen besprochen worden wie heute'⁵¹ - in general discussion about cultural phenomena. Enzensberger's analysis of the declining influence of the literary reviewer, although occupying only a handful of pages, belongs at the very heart of his examination of the social role of literature at the end of the twentieth century. In this essay, he raises questions concerning the relationship between literary texts and literary criticism, between the role of the reviewer and the establishment of a bourgeois public sphere and between the politics of culture and the economics of market forces. At the end of his discussion, he concludes by setting out a revised position for literature: reading is seen simply as one minority activity amongst many others, no longer a necessary or privileged part of the debating process in the public sphere. The role of the literary critic in setting the agenda for educated discussion is shown to have fallen victim to a similar process of cultural evolution.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 52.

⁵¹ Enzensberger, 'Rezensenten-Dämmerung', p. 54.

For Enzensberger, the rise in influence of the 'Rezendent', the specialist literary reviewer, is closely linked to the establishment of bourgeois society itself and to its need to secure a space for the discussion of cultural values. This need was met through the literary reviews and longer essays in major newspapers where the analysis of a specific literary text could be used as a springboard for a serious but accessible debate on culture. In Enzensberger's opinion - he gives no indication of the dates of this period of cultural evolution - it is clear that the literary critic has become a 'lebende(s) Fossil'⁵² who has lost the central position and authority once enjoyed. The decline of the power of the 'Rezendent', Enzensberger claims, is part of a larger sociocultural shift. The literary critic was only needed while society placed a high value on the critic's ability to initiate public debate, as long as society 'an der Vorstellung festhielt, die öffentliche Diskussion kulturelle Normen sei etwas Lebenswichtiges'.⁵³ In the contemporary cultural formation of the Federal Republic, this function is no longer valued, not least because, according to Enzensberger, the literary texts which stimulated much of the ensuing cultural discussion, have ceased to offer a comprehensive account of contemporary society. In a statement which shows remarkable consistency with his controversial claims nearly twenty years earlier in Kursbuch 15, Enzensberger again emphasises that literature is no longer a medium of crucial importance to the sociocultural and political agenda of contemporary society:

Die Literatur ist frei, aber sie kann die Verfassung des Ganzen weder legitimieren noch in Frage stellen; sie darf alles, aber es kommt nicht mehr auf sie an.⁵⁴

The literary critic, and, by extension, the critical intellectual in general, simply has no position from which to make a difference in a society dominated by market forces:

⁵² Ibid., p. 55.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

Unter diesen Umständen läuft die Militanz des klassischen Kritikers leer; seine langfristigen Strategien wirken anachronistisch; sein Einfluß verdunstet in der Indifferenz eines pluralistischen Marktes, dem der Unterschied zwischen Dante und Donald Duck Jacke wie Hose ist; seine Autorität wird nicht einmal mehr angefochten, sie erweist sich schlicht als überflüssig.⁵⁵

Although Enzensberger's essay depicts a process of cultural change which acknowledges the marginalisation of literature and the decline in social authority of the literary critic, Enzensberger's tone here is significant. Although his argument is in part a lament for the loss of an important aspect of literary culture, namely the participation of the reviewer in general sociocultural and political discussion, it is not part of a conservative elegy for the decline of traditional high culture in the face of the onslaught of capitalism and popular culture. Enzensberger's tenor here is too distant, too descriptive and anthropological, to register more than a flicker of disappointment at the decline of the literary intellectual. Equally significant is his lack of triumphalism in announcing the twilight of the literary public sphere. There is no sense of iconoclastic pleasure here, nor of any radical programme, along the lines of his 'Baukasten für eine Theorie der Medien' essay, for an alternative public sphere to replace the one which appears lost. Enzensberger's argument inevitably throws up two important and connected questions concerning first, the status of literary culture and second, the possibility, and even desirability, of a post-literary cultural public sphere. Although the second question is only answered elsewhere, the first is addressed directly and echoes comments in other essays: literary culture is reduced to the simple reading of pleasurable texts by 'das wahre, das eigentliche Publikum, eine Minderheit von zehn- bis zwanzigtausend Leuten'.⁵⁶ In fact, when considering the probable readership of a volume of poetry, Enzensberger subsequently amended even this figure to one of

±1354. Diese Zahl (die Enzensbergersche Konstante) ist nicht nur unabhängig

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 55-56.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

von Moden, Publizität, "Zeitgeist"; sie gilt auch – und hier wird die Sache mysteriös – universell, für jede Sprachgemeinschaft.⁵⁷

In the matter of poetry, Enzensberger notes that the desire to write poetry transcends differences of class, age and gender, and means that far more poems are written than are read:

Die Poesie ist das einzige Massenmedium, bei dem die Zahl der Produzenten die der Konsumenten übertrifft.⁵⁸

Writing poetry becomes a universal means of socialisation, whereas reading poetry is rarer: the readership for volumes of poetry is negligible, but permanent, 'eine kleine, radikale, aber stabile Minderheit'.⁵⁹ Reading, Enzensberger argues, should be seen as a 'minority' activity like any other hobby, with no greater claims to representative status or to political efficacy than, again, any other hobby:

Die Literatur aber ist wieder zu dem geworden, was sie von Anfang an war: eine minoritäre Angelegenheit. Diese Reduktion auf ihre wahre Größe hat auch etwas Entlastendes. Die Schriftsteller können sich die repräsentative Maske abschminken, die sie lange Zeit trugen.⁶⁰

The 'minoritäre Angelegenheit' which Enzensberger writes about so warmly here should not be confused with his earlier criticism in 'Das Brot und die Schrift' of the way that decently printed material was becoming available only to a minority, to the 'Happy

⁵⁷ Enzensberger, 'Meldungen vom lyrischen Betrieb. Drei Metaphrasen', Zickzack. Aufsätze, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1997, p. 184.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 183.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 184.

⁶⁰ Enzensberger, 'Rezensenten-Dämmerung', p. 60.

Few'. The minority reading public Enzensberger has in mind is a niche group of consumers who are interested in, and committed to, reading. This group is small by nature but it is neither exclusive nor elitist. It is therefore very different from the minority group of rich investors who are amongst the few able to pay for expensive editions. As a 'minoritäre Angelegenheit', literature is no longer responsible to a traditional bourgeois public sphere for opening up cultural and political debates and the writer no longer has to carry the burden of representing public opinion. As the public has turned its back on literature and entered willingly (and understandably, according to Enzensberger) into a state of 'sekundären Analphabetismus' in which the printed word has lost much of its prestige and authority and social interaction is based largely on oral and visual communication, so reading literature and discussing books has become an irrelevance. This is accepted calmly by Enzensberger, who argues that literature

war immer eine minoritäre Angelegenheit. [...] Nur ihre Zusammensetzung hat sich verändert. Es ist längst kein Standesprivileg, aber auch kein Standeszwang mehr, sich mit ihr zu befassen. Der Sieg des sekundären Analphabetismus kann die Literatur nur radikalisieren: er führt einen Zustand herbei, in dem nur noch freiwillig gelesen wird. Wenn sie aufgehört hat, als Statussymbol, als sozialer Code, als Erziehungsprogramm zu gelten, dann werden nur noch diejenigen die Literatur zur Kenntnis nehmen, die es nicht lassen können.⁶¹

With these changes comes a different set of expectations and responsibilities. The writer has to operate within the framework of a highly competitive economic market where the reader as consumer is sovereign. Instead of representing readers generally in public debate, the writer now has to cultivate a more private relationship with the readership, one which is based more on the shared and exchanged pleasures of the literary text and less on the writer's former function in Germany as a participant in the bourgeois public sphere.

⁶¹ Enzensberger, 'Lob des Analphabetentums', Mittelmaß und Wahn, p. 72.

In an essay on Enzensberger's recent writings, Jürgen Haupt argues that he remains within the tradition of Enlightenment and still uses literature to practise 'Gesellschaftskritik'.⁶² In order to salvage a place for literature and for its readers in a culture dominated by television, the Bild-Zeitung and 'sekundären Analphabetismus', according to Haupt, Enzensberger returns to a position close to that of Adorno where literature is seen as a discursive form which is able to offer 'Widerstandskraft', able to resist the banal and trivialising forces of everyday life. For Haupt, Enzensberger's poetry from Der Untergang der Titanic through to Zukunftsmusik is characterised by a degree of difficulty, ambiguity and abstraction which actually prevents the kind of easy pleasures of reading advocated in Enzensberger's essays. For Haupt, this is all part of a 'kulturpolitische Strategie' whereby Enzensberger deliberately 'condenses' his poems so that they are only accessible to a small group of readers and so become, quite intentionally, a 'minoritäre Angelegenheit'.⁶³

Enzensberger's recent poetry, particularly in the volumes Zukunftsmusik and Kiosk, has been increasingly concerned with difficult epistemological questions which may, it is true, be of limited appeal to readers in the Federal Republic and abroad, but any suggestion that this is part of a deliberate strategy of producing difficult work in order to offer resistance to the cultural industries misses the nature of Enzensberger's work in the 1980s and 1990s. As Michael Hamburger has pointed out, many of Enzensberger's most recent poems have been concerned with the difficulties of perception and of seeing

⁶² 'Angesichts des düsteren geschichtsphilosophischen Horizonts wäre ein Verzicht auf "Literatur" als Aufklärungsinstrument nur logisch. Dennoch hält Enzensberger an ihr, an ihrer denkbaren Wirksamkeit fest: nicht "neue Subjektivität", sondern alte Kritik an Gesellschaftszuständen, Bestandsaufnahme neuer Irritationen am Geschichtsprozeß bleibt ihre Aufgabe'. See Haupt, 'Die Verteidigung des "Kuddelmuddels"', p. 145.

⁶³ Ibid.

clearly.⁶⁴ These difficulties owe much to Enzensberger's intense questioning in poem after poem of the representative status of the artist and of the capacity of any form of art to be able to claim that it can communicate anything truthful. The later poems are difficult, not, as Haupt assumes, because difficulty is seen as an end in itself in a society dominated by the immediacy and simplicity of the 'Nullmedium' and the Bild-Zeitung, but because the poems explore, and at times enact, the highly complex nature of perception and communication, and, like Enzensberger, are wary of claiming to be able either to educate or to represent the readers.⁶⁵ If it is difficult to see Enzensberger's poetry as fully within the project of Enlightenment, then the repeated pronouncements in his essays of the negative sides to 'Aufklärung' should only confirm how ambiguously it is viewed. One only needs to return, for example, to his 'Lob des Analphabetentums' to read how attempts to enlighten and educate people have been used to further exploitation and colonialism.⁶⁶ Arguments of this sort explain Enzensberger's wariness about adopting a representative position and using it to educate and enlighten his reader. Haupt's insistence on placing Enzensberger so firmly within an Enlightenment tradition is not shared by other critics, who have paid more attention to the exact nature of his recent writing. Rolf Warnecke, for example, sees Enzensberger's departure from an Enlightenment position as absolutely crucial to an understanding of his recent work.⁶⁷ Warnecke is right not just to see this move as highly significant in itself, but he is also correct in seeing how far it is linked with Enzensberger's sympathetic portrayal of the ordinary population in the Federal Republic. Enzensberger's trust in the ability of the Kleinbürger to determine their own lives successfully, in large part because they are either already enlightened or have no need of further enlightenment, explains his reluctance to act as an educator. As Warnecke puts it,

⁶⁴ Michael Hamburger, 'Introduction', Enzensberger, Selected Poems, Bloodaxe Books, 1994, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁵ See, for example, 'Schöne Aussichten' and 'Konsistenz', Zukunftsmusik, pp. 11-12 and pp. 24-25 respectively.

⁶⁶ See Enzensberger, 'Lob des Analphabetentums', pp. 61-66.

⁶⁷ Warnecke, 'Kurswechselparade eines Intellektuellen', p. 102.

Mündigkeit besteht für ihn nicht mehr darin, ein aufgeklärtes Bewußtsein zu entwickeln, sondern in der Fähigkeit, die eigenen Interessen zu wahren.⁶⁸

Peter Hannenberg comes to a similar conclusion about how Enzensberger conceives the relationship between the intellectual and the ordinary citizen. For Hannenberg,

Die Rolle des Intellektuellen, wie sie Enzensberger auf seine Weise erfüllt, besteht nicht darin, Utopien und Illusionen das Wort zu reden. Der wahre Intellektuelle ist der Ethnograph seiner Umgebung.⁶⁹

Much though Haupt might want to recuperate Enzensberger's recent work unproblematically into the Enlightenment tradition of the vanguardist intellectual educating the wider population, particularly about the critical and moral value of Belletristik and the damaging effects of popular culture, so many of his statements reject such a position. There can be little doubt that Enzensberger advocates in his later work a very modest role for literature and a position of reduced significance for the critical intellectual. He also argues repeatedly for recognition of the virtues of the pragmatic, tenacious, realistic 'Kleinbürger' in maintaining a dynamic and democratic political culture in the Federal Republic. But closely connected to the 'Mittelmaß' he celebrates is the dark side of popular democracy, the point at which 'Mittelmaß' becomes 'Wahn' and the cunning populace becomes the violent mob. It is appropriate to conclude with a brief examination of the limits to Enzensberger's cultural populism.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

⁶⁹ Peter Hanenberg, 'Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Ein Versuch über Aporien, Fehler und Krisen', German Monitor, 1996, 38, pp. 156-57.

CONCLUSION

Enzensberger's comments on literary culture as a 'minoritäre Angelegenheit' provide only the most recent example of what has been a permanent feature of his writing. This is his awareness that the activity of writing effectively, in whatever genre, requires a sociological overview of the dynamics at work in German cultural practices at any given historical moment. Linked to this awareness, and what really informs his understanding of writing effectively, is his enduring commitment to the promotion of democracy in the Federal Republic. What constitutes a desirable form of German democracy is rarely defined by Enzensberger, and is normally alluded to only in negation. Only in the definition of what is undemocratic, or what threatens democracy at any given moment, whether it is the meekness of the general population, the policies of the German government, the social costs of global capitalism, or any authoritarian tendency in the fields of political activism, education or science, to name only the more obvious examples, do we understand what Enzensberger might really be committed to preserving, namely a productive, inclusive, heterogeneous and fluid political culture.

Much of Enzensberger's writing, I have argued, analyses and, where necessary, intervenes to alter, the shifting relationship between economic and political forces in the Federal Republic and the ability of ordinary people to participate in and contribute to this dynamic democracy. In his assumption that, at times, the cultural practices and symbolic exchanges of ordinary people are able to challenge in productive ways potential threats to democracy, it is appropriate to consider Enzensberger's project as containing elements of a complex German variant of cultural populism. Although it might seem bizarre to think of populist inclinations, for example, in Enzensberger's earliest work, as critical as it is of the ordinary, acquiescent 'Lämmer', his anger arises out of frustration at their inability to contest the authoritarian and conservative discourses circulated by the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie'. It is at this point that Adorno's thinking on the 'Kulturindustrie' is most attractive to him. For Enzensberger, the interconnection of the superficially diverse

channels of popular culture in the form of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', the monolithic disseminator of the dominant (conservative) ideology, offers an explanation of the reasons underlying the refusal of the general public to interrogate what they see and hear daily. Yet Enzensberger questions from the start the monolithic nature of the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie', first in his argument that the critical intellectual can work within it to create spaces which contest and subvert its ideological position, and second, in his identification that the 'Bewußtseins-Industrie' does not 'inject' false needs and desires into the 'duped' masses, but participates, in capitalism, in a struggle to channel the utopian longings of the many into commodity form.

The crisis of German democracy in the second half of the 1960s leads Enzensberger to question explicitly the political effectiveness of the critical intellectual in the vanguard of social change. Consequently, he intensifies his cultural populism by arguing for popular access to the mechanisms of cultural production, as well as to the channels of cultural consumption, as a key part of his theory of the media. Similarly, he explores the dialogic, inclusive possibilities of various literary forms as a way of aiding popular enlightenment (though, crucially, by trying to minimise the visibility of the intellectual-as-educator!) The interrogation of the figure of the critical intellectual continues in the 1970s with his critique of large-scale utopian projects in Mausoleum and Der Untergang der Titanic. These works continue his populist trajectory in their advocacy of limited strategic political interventions by ordinary people rather than by intellectuals (or politicians), a feature which is particularly explicit in his defence of 'Normalität', of 'Mittelmaß', and of the 'Kleinbürger' in the 1980s. In line with his claims that the general population is already 'aufgeklärt', comes his insistence on the (difficult) pleasures of cultural consumption, and of literature as a kind of stimulating leisure activity rather than as a contributory site to a critical public sphere.

Enzensberger's position in the 1990s on the relationship of different cultural practices to the maintenance of a democratic politics is complex. In his 'Nullmedium' essay on

German television, he argued that viewers did not use the medium for the communication of information, but as a way of refusing meaning. Although he emphasised that the 'Kleinbürger' were already 'aufgeklärt' and were in large part innovative democrats, he did not see television as particularly significant in the maintenance of popular democracy. In his essays on the 'Nullmedium' and the Bild-Zeitung¹, he certainly did not identify the existence of a critical use of popular culture in the Federal Republic. Nevertheless, as the democratic consciousness of ordinary citizens appeared already secured, he implied that, at this historical moment, it remained relatively unaffected by popular culture. Popular culture was in many ways viewed as something banal, at times literally and deliberately meaningless. It could be counted neither as an alternative public sphere nor as an effective bearer of any anti-democratic ideology. This is not to say that the media do not have a problematic role, in Enzensberger's opinion, in the increasingly violent nature of contemporary society. Although he stops short of suggesting that the media cause violence, he does argue that the circulation of violent images on a regular basis in newspapers and on television offers encouragement to anyone seeking, through an exhibitionist act of violence, to reinforce a weakened sense of self.² But even in this criticism of contemporary media practices, Enzensberger nowhere suggests that they are now, or potentially, a threat to democracy.

¹ Enzensberger notes 'Die Botschaft von Bild lautet dagegen, daß es keine denkbare Botschaft mehr gibt; sein einziger Inhalt ist die Liquidierung aller Inhalte'. Enzensberger, 'Der Triumph der Bild-Zeitung', p. 82. He argues that Bild-Zeitung is only the most extreme variant of tendencies which are to be found in all newspapers, magazines and television programmes. Ibid., p. 87.

² 'So wirkt das Fernsehen wie ein einziger, riesiger Graffito, als Prothese für das autistisch geschrumpfte Ich'. Enzensberger, Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg, p. 70. In this way, it could be argued that the media have finally become truly interactive, dependent upon the brutal participation of the perpetrators of violence.

Enzensberger does not exempt traditional 'high' culture either from his critique of contemporary obsessions with criminality and violence.³ However, in general, literature is not seen as contributing in any direct way to the ideological predispositions of the population. As Peter von Matt points out, what Enzensberger's recent poems seem to demand are 'denkende Leser, die sich der Eleganz seiner Weisheit erfreuen'.⁴ They do not seek to 'mobilise' the readership in any way.⁵ Despite the undeniable difficulty of much of his writing, however, there is compelling evidence that he uses in a sophisticated fashion a variety of written forms in his commitment to promoting democracy.⁶

However, the populist elements in Enzensberger's general position lead him into difficulties on a number of occasions in the early 1990s. His assumptions concerning the democratic common sense of the German population were severely tested by the increasing recourse to violence by Germans against immigrants and asylum seekers and the apparent collapse in moral order in some German cities. The turn to violence draws attention to one of the weaknesses in his original defence of the interest-based life politics of the 'Kleinbürger'. Although Enzensberger's vision of democracy celebrated diversity and difference, his writing on the 'Kleinbürger' assumed a degree of homogeneity within this grouping based overwhelmingly on shared class interests. The loose and fluid

³ Ibid., pp. 66-68.

⁴ Peter von Matt, 'Dem denkenden Leser', Der Spiegel, 1995, 15, p. 219.

⁵ 'Die Vorstellung, daß sich die Bevölkerung Frankreichs, Deutschlands oder Schwedens durch Gedichte mobilisieren ließe, ist absurd. Es mag hie und da Veteranen und Sektierer geben, die nach wie vor von einer solchen Rolle träumen. Alle andern sind sich darüber im klaren, daß die Dreckarbeit von ganz anderen Spezialisten übernommen worden ist'. Enzensberger, 'Haßproduzenten. Eine Erinnerung', Zickzack. Aufsätze, pp. 104-05.

⁶ Klaus R. Scherpe argues that Enzensberger uses a 'negative Schreibstrategie des permanenten Dissens', an aesthetic strategy which aims at a 'sinnliche Wahrnehmung und Empfindung'. According to Scherpe, this aesthetic strategy is the basis for Enzensberger's 'Ethik der Verantwortung'. See Scherpe, 'Moral im Ästhetischen: Andersch, Weiss und Enzensberger', Weimarer Beiträge, 42, 1996: 1, pp. 121-24.

coalitions of 'Kleinbürger', which form to defend shared interests, posited as an opponent the intellectuals, big business, or the government, rarely other 'Kleinbürger'. In prioritising a sociological understanding of German society based largely on a traditional class analysis, he did not address potential and actual conflicts in German society deriving from the continuing inequalities in the Federal Republic based either on gender or ethnicity.⁷

Any potential social conflicts, Enzensberger had argued, would not threaten the Federal Republic's overwhelming 'Mittelmaß', its extreme mediocrity, the framework for a flourishing, pluralistic democracy. However, he had suggested that this 'Mittelmaß' existed in a symbiotic relationship to its opposite category, namely 'Wahn'. Dissent from this consensual and extensive commitment to German 'Mittelmaß' could only be found, he assumed, in a tiny minority, whose radical political opposition to the hegemony of the 'Kleinbürger' rarely took concrete form. However, Enzensberger argued,

[w]enn die Selbstausgrenzung jedoch verzweifelte Formen annimmt, kommt es zur Flucht nach vorn, und die führt in den Wahn. Der Terrorismus, soweit er überhaupt noch politische Motive für sich in Anspruch nimmt, agiert diesen Wahn aus. Er führt den Volkskrieg als Krieg gegen die Mehrheit der Bevölkerung.⁸

Although this analysis anticipates the outbreaks of violence which so shocked Enzensberger only five years later, he had been confident that the hegemonic consensus surrounding German 'Mittelmaß' was far stronger than any potential recourse to 'Wahn'.⁹

⁷ Enzensberger did address, somewhat belatedly, questions of ethnic identity and immigration in Germany in Die große Wanderung. Dreiunddreißig Markierungen, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1992.

⁸ Enzensberger, 'Mittelmaß und Wahn', p. 274.

⁹ Enzensberger argues that the 'Deutscher Herbst' of 1977 represented the last residual impulse of German 'Wahn'. He claims that the regression into violent protest by the RAF never really threatened the 'Mittelmaß' of the Federal Republic, although it did provoke a

Although the German commitment to a democratic 'Mittelmaß' appears, to Enzensberger at this time, unassailable, he describes a form of 'Wahn' which is evident in other countries and increasing. This phenomenon, which often constitutes 'ein leeres Attentat'¹⁰, takes the form of terrorism for its own sake, rather than out of any identifiable political motivation:

Wir sähen uns mit einem Schrecken konfrontiert, der zugibt, daß er um seiner selbst willen existiert, mit einem Schrecken ohne Ritual, ohne Ziel, ohne Warum, einem Terror, der von jedem ausgeübt werden und der jeden treffen kann.¹¹

Enzensberger develops this theme in several works in the 1990s which explore the possible implosion of the German consensus supporting 'Mittelmaß' through a growing inclination to collective violence. In Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg, he argues that one consequence of the end of the Cold War is the number of civil wars which have broken out world-wide. Moreover, a 'molekularer Bürgerkrieg'¹² is gaining ground in European cities, not least in Germany:

In Wirklichkeit hat der Bürgerkrieg längst in den Metropolen Einzug gehalten. Seine Metastasen gehören zum Alltag der großen Städte, nicht nur in Lima und Johannesburg, in Bombay und Rio, sondern auch in Paris und Berlin, in Detroit und Birmingham, in Mailand und Hamburg. Geführt wird er nicht nur von Terroristen und Geheimdiensten, Mafiosi und Skinheads, Drogengangs und

response based on 'Wahn': 'es war dem Terrorismus also gelungen, den Wahn, dem sie zum Opfer gefallen waren, der Gesellschaft im Ganzen zu oktroyieren'. Ibid.

¹⁰ Enzensberger, 'Die Leere im Zentrum des Terrors', Mittelmaß und Wahn, p. 248.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Enzensberger, Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg, p. 18.

Todesschwadronen, Neonazis und Schwarzen Sheriffs, sondern auch von unauffälligen Bürgern, die sich über Nacht in Hooligans, Brandstifter, Amokläufer und Serienkiller verwandeln.¹³

Enzensberger claims that what connects these differing instances of collective violence is their autistic character and the inability of their perpetrators to distinguish between destruction and self-destruction.¹⁴ The similarities between contemporary acts of violence are so strong, for Enzensberger, that he argues '[a]uf diese Weise kann jeder U-Bahn-Wagen zu einem Bosnien en miniature werden'.¹⁵ For Enzensberger, underlying such violence is the desire in all cases of the perpetrators to eliminate diversity and difference¹⁶, and hence it is a mistake to look for causal explanations of such atrocities in any specific economic or social factors.¹⁷ It would seem that the 'Normalität', which he had previously defended, is under threat from within, from, in many cases, 'Kleinbürger' dissatisfied with his preferred pluralistic 'Mittelmaß'. Although this would appear to test severely Enzensberger's commitment to a populist approach, he does not abandon faith in a popular commitment to democracy, shown by the everyday practices of ordinary people reestablishing civil society. He describes the quiet but obstinate reaction of 'die wahren Helden des Bürgerkriegs'¹⁸, who help to alleviate the distress and disorder left in the wake of violence:

¹³ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁶ 'Jeder Unterschied wird zum lebensgefährlichen Risiko.' Enzensberger, *ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁷ See Parkes, 'Postmodern polemics', p. 102.

¹⁸ Enzensberger, Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg, p. 91.

Nach der Straßenschlacht kommen die Glaser, nach der Plünderung schließen zwei Männer mit Zangen und Kabelenden das Telefon in der verwüsteten Zelle wieder an. Notärzte arbeiten die Nacht hindurch, um in überfüllten Kliniken Überlebende zu retten.¹⁹

In his anthropological description of the commitment of the tenacity, pragmatism and realism of ordinary members of the public, Enzensberger still finds much to praise in the everyday. Germany's salvation lies ultimately in the 'praktische Vernunft'²⁰ of ordinary people:

Die Beharrlichkeit dieser Menschen gleicht einem Wunder. Sie wissen sogar daß sie die Welt nicht in Ordnung bringen können. Nur eine Ecke, ein Dach, eine Wunde. Sie wissen sogar, daß die Mörder wiederkehren werden, in der nächsten Woche oder in einem Jahrzehnt. Der Bürgerkrieg dauert nicht ewig, aber droht immer wieder von neuem.²¹

Significantly, then, Enzensberger does not abandon hope in the commitment of ordinary people to civil society, to his 'mittelmäßig' German democracy, despite the increasing violence and mob action in Germany. This is Enzensberger's response to the classic 'populist' dilemma that recent events place him in: as a populist position is by definition celebratory of the practices of the general public, it can therefore only assume an uncritical

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 92.

²⁰ Karl-Markus Gauß makes this point well in his review of Enzensberger's latest collection of essays, Zickzack: 'Kurz, die Rettung Deutschlands vor den Deutschen wächst in der "praktischen Vernunft": Sie allein verhindert, daß sich die Nation an den Traum von imperialer Größe verlieren oder aber ganz im Gegenteil in der Selbstbezeichnung, im ewigen Faschismusverdacht versauern wird.' Gauß, 'Total normal', die tageszeitung, Freitag, 23 Mai, 1997, p. 15.

²¹ Enzensberger, Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg, p. 92.

attitude towards contemporary society. A populist approach is all very well while popular common sense dictates that the public acts in an enlightened, democratic fashion, but not, obviously, when society seems on the brink of succumbing voluntarily to mob rule. Unperturbed, Enzensberger here exhibits a degree of quiet optimism about the popular democratic consensus in the Federal Republic.

The other side to the 'populist' dilemma concerns the function of the critic. As long as the public acts as the critic wishes, the 'populist' critic has no reason to adopt the role of the maligned interventionist 'critical intellectual'. Enzensberger's praise for the limited, pragmatic, local action of his quiet, obstinate heroes parallels his notion of the role of the intellectual in the maintenance of democracy. For at least thirty years his work had called into question the notion of the literary intellectual as the universal 'conscience' of the nation²², anticipating much of the debate on the 'Intellektuellendämmerung' of the early 1990s in Germany.²³ Instead, he assumes the mantle of the 'specific' intellectual²⁴, working locally and pragmatically for the defence of German democracy, particularly where he has seen it threatened by acts of collective 'Wahn'.²⁵ The point at which his anthropological detachment ends and his direct action as a critical intellectual recommences, the limits to his version of populism, one could say, is when the minimal conditions for civil interaction are threatened:

²² Enzensberger's position is articulated in 'Das empfindliche Ungeheuer', pp. 238-39.

²³ The 'Intellektuellendämmerung' is discussed in Parkes, 'Postmodern polemics', pp. 93-95.

²⁴ Foucault explores the concepts of the 'universal' and the 'specific' intellectual in Foucault, 'The political function of the intellectual', Radical Philosophy, 17, Summer 1977, pp. 12-14.

²⁵ Stuart Parkes found this commitment to the local highly contentious: 'By [...] strictly circumscribing the areas in which a political response is possible, Enzensberger is adopting a stance reminiscent of Voltaire's famous dictum 'Il faut cultiver notre jardin'. See Parkes, 'Postmodern polemics', p. 103.

Daß jedermann aussprechen kann, was er von der Macht im Staat oder vom lieben Gott hält, ohne gefoltert und mit dem Tod bedroht zu werden; daß Meinungsverschiedenheiten vor Gericht und nicht auf dem Weg der Blutrache ausgetragen werden; daß Frauen sich frei bewegen dürfen und nicht gezwungen sind, sich verkaufen oder beschneiden zu lassen; daß man die Straße überqueren kann, ohne in die MG-Garben einer wildgewordenen Soldateska zu geraten; all das ist nicht nur angenehm, es ist unerläßlich. Überall auf der Welt gibt es genügend Menschen, vermutlich die meisten, die sich solche Zustände wünschen und die dort, wo sie herrschen, bereit sind, sie zu verteidigen. Ohne die Emphase zu weit zu treiben, wird man sagen können, daß es sich um das zivilisatorische Minimum handelt.²⁶

Enzensberger's commitment to the maintenance of the 'zivilisatorische Minimum' ensures his intervention whenever it seems threatened. As Michael Hamburger points out, this position is not dissimilar to that adopted in his earliest writings, where the 'Lämmer' were castigated for not confronting the atrocities caused by those opposed to democracy.²⁷ In a recent interview, Enzensberger argued

wir müssen das, was wir an Zivilisation und Demokratie haben, nach innen verteidigen. [...] Also, der Iran muß wissen, was er tut, und es liegt mir vollkommen fern, denen zu sagen, wie sie ihre Gesellschaft einrichten sollen. Aber in dem Moment, wenn sie auf unserem Territorium mit ihren Spielregeln

²⁶ Enzensberger, *Die große Wanderung*, p. 65. Peter Hanenberg rightly argues that Enzensberger's emphasis on 'das zivilisatorische Minimum' is crucial to an understanding of his defence of democracy. See Hanenberg, 'Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Ein Versuch', p. 154, where he also draws attention to the poem, 'Episode', *Zukunftsmusik*, pp. 88-89.

²⁷ Hamburger, 'Introduction', Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Selected Poems*, p. 11.

anfangen wollen, bin ich berechtigt, mich dagegen zu verteidigen. Und bei dieser Verteidigung bin ich kompromißlos und auch ziemlich handfest.²⁸

The recourse to an empty violence attributed here to Iran, unwilling to recognise the 'Spielregeln' of German democracy, stands as one example amongst many threats to 'das zivilisatorische Minimum'.²⁹ The role of the critical intellectual in Germany, as Enzensberger sees it, is to be an anthropologist of the everyday, charting the productive and fluid activities of the resilient and democratic 'Kleinbürger' and intervening only where 'das zivilisatorische Minimum' is under threat:

Man hat aus Sisyphos einen existentialistischen Helden machen wollen, einen Outsider und Rebellen von überlebensgrößer Tragik, umgeben mit luziferischem Glanz. Vielleicht ist das falsch. Vielleicht ist er etwas sehr viel Wichtigeres, nämlich eine Figur des Alltags. [...] Später mußte er, zur Strafe für seinen Menschenverstand, einen schweren Stein bergauf rollen, immer wieder. Dieser Stein ist der Frieden.³⁰

This is a modest, but nonetheless challenging role.

²⁸ Enzensberger, in "'Es gibt eine schweigende Mehrheit von Demokraten." Ein Interview mit Hans Magnus Enzensberger.', Anne Hufschmid, die tageszeitung, 29.12.1992, quoted in Hanenberg, 'Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Ein Versuch', p. 154.

²⁹ See also his controversial comparison of Saddam Hussein with Hitler in Enzensberger, 'Hitlers Wiedergänger. Mit einer Nachschrift', Zickzack. Aufsätze, pp. 79-88.

³⁰ Enzensberger, Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg, p. 93.

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