

## Enzensberger's *landessprache* and Its Translation

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In his critique of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's poem *landessprache*, Christopher Levenson observes:

In the absence of any narrative or genuine situational framework, [Enzensberger] tends to rely excessively on catalogues, held loosely together not by recurrent images but by motif phrases. . . . This results in an entertaining but ultimately pointless, because structureless, display of puns, a magpie hoard of bright images, ideas and allusions.<sup>1</sup>

His essay actually being a critique of a German-English edition of a collection which contains *landessprache*, Levenson also deals with the translations produced by Jerome Rothenburg, Michael Hamburger, and Enzensberger himself.<sup>2</sup> It is the purpose of my inquiry to investigate, in the light of Levenson's criticisms of both the original and Michael Hamburger's translation, the poem *landessprache*. As Levenson observes, Enzensberger's poetry is a "social poetry" which "attacks the complacent, overstuffed, short-memory German public since the *Wirtschaftswunder*." In the case of *landessprache*, this general interpretation catches only the surface-level meaning of the poem. On another level, the poem is a satirical play with the German "Landessprache" ("language of the land"). This satire on the *landessprache* is written in the *landessprache*; form and content have become identical. When turning the poem into American English, the translator faces the task of reproducing this identity, i.e., of rendering the satirical content and at the same time satirically playing with the English language. He has to produce a cultural translation for the American reader without allowing the latter to forget that the poem is about Germany.

Levenson points out some of the shortcomings both of Hamburger's and Rothenburg's translations. What also deserves to be pointed out is the fact that, since *landessprache* is, according to Levenson's tongue-in-cheek interpretation, written "for people who read the papers" rather than for literary scholars, the poem would seem to reveal itself more easily to someone who grew up in post-war Germany and thus acquired a natural familiarity with the language of the

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<sup>1</sup> "Poems for People Who Read the Papers," *Delos*, IV (1970), 212.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Poems for People Who Don't Read Poems*, translated by Michael Hamburger, Jerome Rothenberg, and the author. Atheneum (New York, 1968). This edition changes the title of the poem "landessprache" to "hier spricht man deutsch." The German edition is in: *Landessprache*, Suhrkamp Verlag (Frankfurt, 1960).

*Wirtschaftswunder* burgher as used in the lowbrow dailies, the sports papers, and in everyday speech on streetcars and subways. It would appear that Michael Hamburger does not fulfill these conditions; catching only the face-value meanings, his translation fails to render the network of puns, ambiguities and associations which constitutes the mode of existence of the original. For this reason, I have attempted my own rendering of Enzensberger's *landessprache*. This attempt admittedly uses Hamburger's translation as a starting point<sup>3</sup> and by no means claims to be "correct." Instead, it is intended, in conjunction with the essay, to provoke a new look at what Levenson considers a pointless, because structureless, display of puns, images and allusions, and provide the material out of which a new translation could be produced.

The poet informs us why his use of language is structureless and pointless. He tells us in line 132 that he has lost "was auf meiner Zunge schwebt," i.e., "what is on the tip of my tongue," as one would translate if one—as can easily happen—misread the line for the idiomatic phrase "was *mir* auf *der* zunge schwebt." The poet is not referring to what at this particular moment is on the tip of his tongue. He has lost what is *always* on his or any human being's tongue, he has lost his language. I suggest that the poet's confession, made in confused *landessprache*, be translated as follows: "I have lost that which is on *top* of *my* tongue."

Having lost his language, the poet is incapable of communication. He attempts to use the *landessprache* but he literally makes a mess of it. He confuses idioms or uses them in their unidiomatic literal sense. The result is a slough of puns, ambiguities and associations. In fact, the whole poem can be considered as one extended pun on the German language. Yet it is not Enzensberger's intention to merely display a catalogue of puns. His mission is to point out the ills of his country. As the poet sees it, some of these ills manifest themselves in the country's language.

In a short paper, I can discuss only a few of the difficulties that face the translator of *landessprache* and discuss, and defend, only a few samples from my own translation. Also, since this inquiry is, at least in part, an exegesis of the poem as well as a commentary on its translation, an attempt had to be made at reaching a happy medium between a running commentary and a "think-piece" in the form of an essay. The compromise which appeared to be best suited to an undertaking of this sort was to first offer my own translation of the whole poem and then discuss selected *loci* and contexts together with Hamburger's and my own renderings.

*landessprache*

what have i lost here,  
in this land,  
whereto my elders brought me

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<sup>3</sup> In my translation I took over the following verses—in part refrain verses—from Hamburger: 11, 15, 16, 25, 27, 33, 36, 46, 80, 83, 111, 114.

unsuspecting?  
 born here, but of bad cheer, 5  
 absent i am here,  
 settled in this wretched *gemütlichkeit*,  
 in this nice, contented pit.  
 what have i got here, what have i lost here,  
 in this butcher's paradise, this sleepy land of milk and honey, 10  
 where things are looking up but getting nowhere,  
 where surfeit hungrily bites into the embroidered napkin,  
 where in delicatessen stores poverty, white as chalk,  
 with vomiting voice through the whipped cream croaks and cries:  
 things are looking up! 15  
 where a profit margin away from the poor rich the rich poor  
 in ecstasy smash their cinema seats,  
 there things are looking up from fall to fall,  
 where the *deutschmark* sings hallelujah and all's very well  
 but it isn't enough 20  
 that leisure jump to it, steps on the gas, makes a hit,  
 this is the lesser evil, it is only half of it,  
 it makes no difference, it isn't enough  
 that the wage negotiators stray lost in the streets  
 and with clenched fists rejoice 25  
 and praise and proclaim:  
  
 here things are looking up,  
 here everything is just fine -ancial,  
 where things are looking up backwards,  
 here one director uses the hymnal to screw another director, 30  
 here the lightly disabled veterans wage war against the severely disabled,  
 here the rule is *achtung* keep smiling,  
  
 and this is the lesser evil,  
 this doesn't surprise me,  
 this the customers are accustomed to, 35  
 here, where one hand buys the other,  
 cross my heart, here we are at home,  
  
 here let us build,  
 on this aryan junkyard,  
 on this creaking parking lot, 40  
 where from the ruins ruins sprout,  
 brand-new, ruins in stock pile, on credit,  
 on stand-by, on recall,  
  
 being here's glorious,

where the consumed consumer, 45  
 and this is the lesser evil,  
 loses his hair,  
 where he veils his successful head  
 in wrapping paper and cellophane,  
 where he absently calls from the pit: 50  
 here let us build,

in this secret murderers' pit,  
 where, hurried and impotent, the calendar tears down its own leaves,  
 where the undigested past rots in the garbage disposals  
 and the future grinds its false teeth, 55  
 that's only because things are looking up,

we'll pour some stain remover on it,  
 that's our custom here, that doesn't surprise me,  
 here we've got it made, 60  
 where the positive things are quoted at peak prices,  
 the chambers of commerce bury themselves in them  
 and lay them out under bullet-proof glass,

in the land of the free and the home of the blind,  
 in our look pay and lay away plan stores,  
 and this isn't all, this is only half of it, 65  
 this is the deep-freeze wilderness,  
 this is the successful rat race, dancing  
 in scanty mink, on broken knees,  
 in the eternal spring of amnesia,

this is a different country which isn't like other countries, 70  
 this makes me remorseful, and that it makes me remorseful  
 is the lesser evil, for it is true  
 what its victims, quite ordinary dead people,  
 call out from under the earth, something without sound and success 75  
 that beats against the sound-staunching pavement  
 from below and mists it so it grows dark,  
 spotted and wet, till a puddle,

a quite ordinary puddle, has flooded it,  
 and has flooded the fairytale dwarf,  
 the larch tree, little grey mouse, 80  
 and lovely rapunzel, they're no longer here,  
 and there are no more cities, and no fish,

they have choked in that puddle,

how my brothers the commuters blameless and help less, 85  
 how they make me remorseful, our devoted executors of the law,  
 the men from the gas company, as they piously wade together  
 with their sealing pincers, as they stomp  
 in their absent jackboots through bottomless places,  
 their haloes law and orderly on their heads,

were they people like other people, 90  
 were this a quite ordinary country, not  
 this night-and-fog country,  
 overcrowded with absentees  
 that who they are neither know nor care to know,  
 that came to this country, 95  
 in their flight from this country,  
 and will be flighty until the pit,

were it different it could be helped,  
 enough would be done to comfort and heal,  
 were it not this fallow dead-voiced enemy land! 100

what have i lost here, why do i search  
 and poke around in this incompetent tangle  
 of close combat pins, of bonus coupons,  
 chamois beard hats, clearance sales, and find nothing  
 but chronic chronologically filed gymnasiums 105  
 and specialists from the federal bureau of humanization  
 in the barracks of the barracks for the barracks,

what am i here for? and what shall i say?  
 in what language, and to whom?  
 the choice hurts me like the stab of a knife, 110  
 this makes me remorseful, this is the lesser evil,  
 it screams and so on  
 with little screams up to heaven  
 and pretends to be bigger than it is,  
 but it isn't the whole, 115  
 it's only the half which screams up to heaven,  
 it still isn't enough:

for this country, raving with hunger,  
 with its own hands carefully argues itself to pieces,  
 this country is divided from itself, 120  
 a bisected, inwardly divided heart,  
 senselessly ticking, a bomb made of flesh,  
 a wet and absent wound:

germany, germany, god shed disgrace on thee,  
hailed down to infamy from fall to fall 125  
below all ordinary people:

my two countries and i, we are through,  
and yet i am imploringly here,  
in ashes and sackcloth, and ask myself:  
what have i lost here? 130

that i have lost here,  
that which is on top of my tongue,  
something different, the whole thing,  
that fearlessly jests with the whole world  
and doesn't drown in this puddle, 135

lost to this alien divided gasping,  
the suppressed gasping in the workers' *free press*,  
the chronic frankfurt observer gasping,  
(and this is the lesser evil),  
a dead-voiced croaking that knows nothing about itself, 140  
about which i care to know nothing, model country,  
murderer's pit, into which i've been heartily thrown  
still if barely half alive,

there i'm going to stay  
i will not shut up nor ship out, 145  
there i'll stay for a while  
until i travel hence to the other people,  
and rest in ease, in a country quite ordinary,  
elsewhere,  
not here. 150

The keynote of the poem is struck in the question "was habe ich hier verloren?" and the synonymous "was habe ich hier zu suchen?" (lines 9, 101, 130, 131, and, in slightly altered form, in 108, 136). The question is an idiomatic expression meaning "What am I doing here?" "Why am I here?" However, Enzensberger uses the two idioms in their literal sense: "What have I lost here?" "What am I looking for here?" In each instance, I chose to translate the literal meaning. In rendering the more overt idiomatic meaning, Hamburger misses the socio-political implications of these phrases. Enzensberger, whose socialistic views need not be discussed in this inquiry, lashes out at the seemingly capitalistic origin of these idioms. It is easy to imagine—and we do not need linguistic precision here; what counts is what the reader of the poem will come to associate with these phrases—that the sayings were originally used against people trespassing on private property; the two idioms can imply a *verboten*. There is a parallel in the English saying "You have no business being here."

The poet has of course no “big business” here, he has come in “ashes and sackcloth” (129). However, as I already pointed out, he has “lost” something in the very sense of the word, namely his language. Hamburger’s translation of this passage misses the central idea of the loss of language, while it does bring out the “business” idea:

what is my business here,  
my business here is with that  
which hovers on my tongue . . .

Throughout the poem, Enzensberger parodies, and corrupts, idioms by using them in their literal sense. In line 131 he carries the parody to the point of answering his question within the terms of the same idiom:

was habe ich hier verloren?  
das habe ich hier verloren, 131  
was . . .

The idiom does not really exist in the form in which the poet uses it in line 131; it exists only in the question form and in the negative. On the basis of the existing idiom, Enzensberger makes up his own idiom. I translated this play as:

*what* have i lost here?  
*that* i have lost here,  
that which . . .

This rendering catches the ridiculing echo effect in the original, which combines the idea of a loss—of language—with the idea of a serious business—the concern with the *landessprache*. The somewhat clumsy arrangement—the “that” at the beginning of the sentence—equals a similarly clumsy arrangement in the German relative clause where the demonstrative pronoun *das* is awkwardly far away from its corresponding relative pronoun. Besides, the line “that i have lost here” is ambiguous: If we read “that” as a conjunction, the verse means that the poet has “lost here,” i.e., his attempt at communicating his message has failed.

Lines 5-8 describe how the poet’s message is doomed to failure:

eingeboren, doch ungetrost,  
abwesend bin ich hier,  
ansässig im gemütlichen elend,  
in der netten zufriedenen grube.

The word *ungetrost* does not exist. It is a confusion of related words: *getrost* (“confident,” “of good cheer”), *untröstlich* (“disconsolate”), and *ungetröstet* (“uncomforted”). *Getrost* implies blind faith in some higher authority such as

God, or the Führer. The poet, who stands outside the herd of cheerful sheep, incorrectly uses the adjective with a negating prefix. The same incorrectness and the same meaning are rendered if we translate:

born here, but of bad cheer,  
absent i am here,  
settled in this wretched *gemütlichkeit*.

Rhyme and in-rhyme have the same ridiculing formulaic effect as the prefix play in the German. Hamburger does not reproduce the effect:

native but comfortless  
absently i am here,  
settled in this cosy squalor.

In “comfortless,” Hamburger chose a less important component of “ungetrost.” “Cosy squalor” does not render “gemütlichen elend,” which is an oxymoron overtly alluding to the often-quoted “Nachkriegselend,” the post-war poverty and misery, and less overtly expressing the poet’s indignation at an *Elend* of a moral nature. This *Elend* is a slight discomfort felt over the sins of Germany’s past; but it is a discomfort that does not do anything about the past, which it tries to drown in *Gemütlichkeit*. Since the word *Gemütlichkeit* is well known in America, where it is considered as expressing something inherently German, I retained the word in its noun form and rendered “gemütlichen elend” as “wretched *gemütlichkeit*.” This phrase reproduces the overt reference to an unfortunate economic situation (in post-war Germany) as well as the allusion to the sins of the past and the lack of effort at coming to grips with those sins.

The *gemütliche elend* is described in lines 10-11:

in dieser schlachtschüssel, diesem schlaraffenland,  
wo es aufwärts geht, aber nicht vorwärts.

*Schlaraffenland* is the name of a fairyland. According to popular etymology—witness the mattress brand-name “Schlaraffia”—“Schlaraffenland” is a blend of *schlafen* (“sleep”) and *raffen* (“grab greedily”). In Enzensberger’s *Wirtschaftswunder* satire, “Schlaraffenland” is a derogatory term for a “land of milk and honey.” The word *schlachtschüssel* puzzles the reader. The word one would normally expect is “*schlachtplatte*,” i.e., a platter of meats. *Schlachtschüssel* means literally “slaughter bowl.” *Schlachter* means “butcher,” “Schlacht” is “battle,” *Schlachtfeld* is “battlefield.” My translation “butcher’s paradise” renders a reference to Germany’s bloody past as well as one to the food surplus which the inhabitants of the milk-and-honey land devour sleepily (i.e., unaware of Germany’s past and the present danger) and in a festive spirit. The latter idea is suggested by “*schlachtschüssel*” being in the vicinity of “*schlaraffenland*.” In that context “*schlachtschüssel*” is reminiscent of “*Schlachtfest*,” a feast celebrated after

the killing of livestock. In that sense, the *Wirtschaftswunder* feast—described with a great deal of onomatopoeia—is indeed a feast that is celebrated after the butcherings of World War II.

Line 11 (“wo es aufwärts geht, aber nicht vorwärts”) is again a pun on prefixes. Things are going “upward” but not “forward.” “Es geht aufwärts” is an idiom meaning: things are improving. In this context, however, “aufwärts” assumes the literal meaning, the post-war meaning, as it were: Buildings are rising. Despite the rebuilding, things are not going “vorwärts,” there is no actual progress. (And it might be well to note that “Vorwärts” is the title of a socialist newspaper.) In rendering this idea, we can follow Hamburger’s translation: “things are looking up but getting nowhere.” The idiom is repeated in line 18: “da geht es aufwärts von fall zu fall.” The overt meaning of “von fall zu fall” is “from case to case,” “case by case.” However, standing next to “aufwärts,” “von fall zu fall” assumes as a secondary connotation the literal meaning: “from downfall to downfall.” The latter idea can be rendered by: “there things are looking up from fall to fall,” where “fall” also in the meaning of autumn would express the ambiguity of the German: Things improve from fall to fall, from year to year. At any rate, this translation would be more appropriate than Hamburger’s rendering: “because things are looking up, more so every day.”

The post-war “progress” does not quite satisfy the speaker of the poem:

. . . das ist nicht genug  
daß da die freizeit spurt und gas gibt und hinhaut. (20-21)

Line 21 harshly satirizes several colloquialisms. *Freizeit* (“leisure time”) is personified by the proverbially aggressive German driver, to whom passing other cars is a sport and being passed a personal disgrace. The colloquial verb *spuren* means “to promptly follow orders.” On the other hand, “spurt” is also an allusion to “(Fahr-)Spur,” i.e., a lane on a freeway. The translation which I suggest—“leisure jumps to it, steps on the gas”—would reproduce the picture both of driving and of prompt compliance. In fact, this rendering would retain a specific connotation which Enzensberger seems to have in mind when he uses “spurt.” The word is synonymous with its cognate “*spüren*” (“feel physically”) and suggests that leisure has been “spurred on” like a horse: *Spuren*, cognate with English “spur,” referred originally to an animal reacting to the spurs. If my interpretation is correct, Enzensberger satirizes the German educational precept of physically enforced obedience—witness the proverb “Wer nicht hören will, muß fühlen”<sup>4</sup>—by applying it to *freizeit*. Leisure jumps to it with so much Teutonic obedience that it “hinhaut,” i.e., crashes. *Hinhauen*—cognate with English “hew”—means “to hit violently.” However, more apparent is the slang connotation of *hinhauen*: Leisure “swings,” is “groovy,” makes a hit. I translated the line: “that leisure jumps to it, steps on the gas, makes a hit.” Swinging leisure steps on the gas so forcefully that it crashes.

<sup>4</sup> “He who does not want to hear must feel.”

There seems to be another association implied in the line. Germans blindly followed their orders, literally “gave gas” in the chambers, and also beat their victims to death. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the poet writes “gas gibt” in two words. The term for accelerating a car is usually written as one word. This connotation will come out in my translation if one sees “jumps to it, steps on the gas, makes a hit” in context with the numerous allusions to the Nazi crimes, i.e., if we read the poem the way it has to be read if its full meaning is to be understood at all: namely as a palimpsest.

The nature of the *Wirtschaftswunder* paradise is succinctly expressed in line 28: “hier ist gut sein.” The verse is ambiguous, particularly because Enzensberger never capitalizes. If one takes “gut” as an adjective, the meaning is: “it is good to be here.” If we take it as a noun, the meaning becomes: “here property is *to be*.” The second meaning is less obvious. A third, the most apparent, implication is: “here all’s right with the world” (as Hamburger translates). I attempted to render all three meanings by:

here everything is just fine -ancial.

The discussion of “hier ist gut sein” brings us to the central motif of Enzensberger’s poem, where numerous lines begin with “hier . . .” Lines 44 ff. make the poet’s intention explicit:

hiersein ist herrlich,  
 wo dem verbrauchten verbraucher . . .  
 die haare ausfallen . . .  
 wo er abwesend aus der grube ruft:  
 hier laßt uns hütten bauen,

in dieser 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,  
 das kommt davon, daß es aufwärts geht,  
 da tun wir fleckenwasser drauf . . .

goldrichtig liegen wir hier,  
 wo das positive zum höchstkurs notiert . . .

The passage parodies Rilke’s *Siebente Elegie*, and Hamburger, who translates “hiersein ist herrlich” as “to be here is glorious,” fails to take into account the importance for *landessprache* of the Rilke quotation:

Hiersein ist herrlich. Ihr wußtet es, Mädchen, ihr auch,  
 die ihr scheinbar entbehret, versankt—, ihr, in den ärgsten  
 Gassen der Städte, Schwärende, oder dem Abfall

Offene. Denn eine Stunde war jeder, vielleicht nicht  
 ganz eine Stunde, ein mit den Maßen der Zeit kaum  
 Meßliches zwischen zwei Weilen—, da sie ein Dasein  
 hatte. Alles. Die Adern voll Dasein.  
 Nur, wir vergessen so leicht, was der lachende Nachbar  
 uns nicht bestätigt oder beneidet. Sichtbar  
 wollen wirs heben, wo sich doch das sichtbarste Glück uns  
 erst zu erkennen gibt, wenn wir es innen verwandeln.

Nirgends, Geliebte, wird Welt sein, als innen. Unser  
 Leben geht hin mit Verwandlung.<sup>5</sup>

What is parodied in Enzensberger's passage—and throughout the poem—is Rilke's celebration of *Verinnerlichung* (spiritualization, "internalization") and dematerialization. Rilke does not completely deny *Hiersein* and *Dasein* their glory: "Hiersein ist herrlich." Yet he considers *Hiersein* and *Dasein* inferior to, and less real than, the inner world: "Nirgends . . . wird Welt sein, als innen." Enzensberger celebrates the *Hiersein* of the *Wirtschaftswunder* consumer in terms ironically reminiscent of the attributes with which Rilke describes the transitoriness of the *Hiersein*. While in Rilke the glories of the *Hiersein* can hardly be measured in terms of time—"ein mit den Maßen der Zeit kaum/ Meßliches zwischen zwei Weilen"—in the *Wirtschaftswunder* world the calendar hastily tears down its own leaves. Rilke's decomposition metaphors—"Schwärende, oder dem Abfall/ Offene"—become actual description in a poem which talks of the suppurating wounds of the past and a past that is rotting in garbage disposals. In Rilke's poem happiness is the most palpable when it is *verinnerlicht*; happiness externalized is not happiness. In reference to exteriorization, Rilke uses a metaphor which alludes to the

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<sup>5</sup> I adopted J. B. Leishman's rendering (Rilke, *Poetry*, vol. I, London, 1960): "Being here's glorious," which, while retaining the Rilkean meaning of *Hiersein*, also lends itself as a reference to a specific location. Leishman translates the whole passage I quoted:

Being here's glorious! Even you knew it, you girls,  
 who went without, as it seemed, sank under,—you, in the vilest  
 streets of cities, festering, or open for refuse.  
 For to each was granted an hour—perhaps not quite  
 so much as an hour—some span that could scarcely be measured  
 by measures of time, in between two whiles, when she really  
 possessed an existence. All. Veins full of existence.  
 But we so lightly forget what our laughing neighbour  
 neither confirms nor envies. We want to be visibly  
 able to show it; whereas the most visible joy  
 can only reveal itself to us when we've transformed it, within.  
 Nowhere, beloved, can world exist but within.  
 Life passes in transformation.

Throughout this study, indented Rilke translations are from Leishman.

digging up of a treasure: "Sichtbar/wollen wirs heben." The picture is corrupted in Enzensberger's "goldrichtig liegen wir hier";<sup>6</sup> on the other hand, Rilke's postulate of the *Verinnerlichung* of happiness appears to be brutally parodied in Enzensberger's description of how the positive things are placed under bullet-proof glass (62).

Enzensberger seems to parody the Germans' *Hang zur Verinnerlichung* (tendency to "internalize" and spiritualize) in two ways. He describes how Germany's past is literally *verinnerlicht*/ "internalized" by suppression in garbage disposals and subterranean caves sealed with sound-proof pavement; I shall return to that point and demonstrate how Enzensberger turns Rilke's argument upside down. Enzensberger also utilizes Rilke's devaluation of the *Dasein* by using the word *abwesend* ("absent") as a constant leitmotif. The burgher absently calls out from the pit: "hier laßt uns hütten bauen" (51). I shall discuss the ominous connotations of "pit" and "hütten." Suffice it for the moment to say that the "absentees" are those who are politically unaware or uninterested; they are the potential assistants—and victims—of a Fourth Reich. These people "are not all there"; the colloquialism is the same in German. It seems that in his special use of *abwesend* as a substitute participle of *nicht-dasein* Enzensberger mimics Rilke's use of the (rarely used) participle *seiend* in a context where Rilke endeavors to present as not actually *seiend* something that had indeed existed in physical form.<sup>7</sup>

The reader of this inquiry may be inclined to object to the dichotomy which I have artificially established between the "Verinnerlicher" Rilke and Enzensberger, the political activist, arguing that the poet—or rather his *persona*—also refers to himself as "abwesend." The argument is resolved when we realize that the poet is indeed "abwesend" in that, having lost the *landessprache* and being "lost to this alien . . . gasping" (136), he cannot communicate his warning message to the (political) absentees. Besides, if we follow Rilke's *verinnerlichender Seinsbegriff*, the realist/activist Enzensberger is indeed an "absentee." On the other hand, it is actually the people who do not understand Enzensberger's message that are *abwesend*. This idea is best illustrated by the poet's comment on the motto for *die scheinintoten* ("the seemingly dead"), a poem which is also in the collection *landessprache*. A translation of the motto from Heraclitus is printed by Enzensberger in the *gebrauchsanweisung* ("directions for use") which is appended to the collection:

Sie verstehen es nicht, auch wenn sie es vernommen; sie sind wie taube.  
das sprichwort bezeugt's ihnen: "anwesend sind sie abwesend."

(They do not understand it, even if they can hear it; they are like the deaf.  
The proverb testifies for them: "Being present, they  
are as though they were absent.")

<sup>6</sup> The literal translation is: "right as gold we lie here" (Hamburger).

<sup>7</sup> "Dies *stand* einmal . . . / . . . wie *seiend*" ("This *stood* once . . . / . . . as though it existed," in Leishman's rendering).

The stanza about the consumer who “abwesend” calls: “hier laßt uns hütten bauen,” i.e., the stanza beginning with “hiersein ist herrlich,” is preceded by the following lines:

hier, wo eine hand die andere kauft,  
hand aufs herz, hier sind wir zuhaus, 37

hier laßt uns hütten bauen . . . 38  
wo aus den ruinen ruinen sprossen,  
nagelneu, ruinen auf vorrat, auf raten,  
auf abruf, auf widerruf . . .

There is an ironic connection between “hier sind wir zuhaus” (“here we are at home”) in line 37 and “hier laßt uns hütten bauen” in line 38. The overt meaning of line 38 is: “here let us build homes.” *Hütten* (“cottages”) implies coziness and warmth. However, there is a secondary connotation. In the language of technology, *hütten* are steel factories. One immediately thinks of Krupp and what is referred to as the military-industrial complex. (My translation “here let us build” attempts to reproduce the ambiguity of the German.) The *zuhaus* and the *hütten* become identical in that lines 37 ff., containing a subtle allusion to Germany’s re-armament (an idea which I render in: “ruins in stock pile”), are in business language, which ties in with the “wo eine hand die andere kauft” and other preceding business-related imagery.

Once we have established the associations with the *Siebente Elegie*, we might want to see a connection between “hier laßt uns hütten bauen” and Rilke’s building imagery. Rilke contrasts the physically present edifice with the “geträumten Tempel der Zukunft,” granting superiority to the *verinnerlichte* temple:

. . . innerlich bauen, mit Pfeilern und Statuen, größer!  
(. . . building it grandlier now, with pillars and statues, *within!*)

Such an association would again underscore the contrast between the exterior, physical existence of the *hütten* and the *verinnerlichte* form of existence, between Enzensberger’s

wo [der verbrauchte verbraucher] abwesend aus der grube ruft:  
hier laßt uns hütten bauen,  
in dieser mördergrube,

and Rilke’s

Dann die Stufen, hinan, Ruf-Stufen hinan, zum geträumten  
Tempel der Zukunft,

(Then the long flight of steps, the call-steps, up to the dreamt-of  
temple of what’s to come,)

which appears to be parodied in Enzensberger's lines. My above statement in respect to "hütten" also applies to "grube." "Grube" can be a cozy little cubby-hole as in line 6—as cozy as the little cottage—or a mining pit. "Grube" assumes a third meaning through line 52 ("in dieser mördergrube"), where it becomes a murderers' den. To retain the association with (war-) industry, I translated "mördergrube" as in "murderers' pit" rather than "murderers' den."

The "mördergrube" resolves the contrast between Rilkean *Verinnerlichung* and the physicalness of the "hütten" and "grube." "Hütten" and "grube" are actually *verinnerlicht* by the word "mördergrube" in its meaning of something purely mental. For Enzensberger is alluding to the idiomatic saying *aus seinem Herzen keine Mördergrube machen*, literally: "not to make a murderers' den out of one's heart." The idiom means: "to wear one's heart on one's sleeve," not to try to hide anything, since one has nothing, no murder, no crime or criminal intention, to hide. (For this reason, I added in my translation the adjective "secret" as an epithet for "murderers' pit.") What Germany is described as attempting to hide is a *mördergrube* in a twofold literal sense. She attempts to conceal the atrocities of the past and the (potential) criminal intentions for the future. For the latter point, we may well read Rilke's lines as allusively functional: "nun *innerlich* bauen, mit Pfeilen und Statuen, größer!" The new armament will indeed be more powerful if it is performed *innerlich*, i.e., in the secrecy of the proverbial *mördergrube*; and we might add that the *Statuen* and *Pfeiler* (statues and pillars) of the new Reich will be more powerful if its pillars are built secretly.<sup>8</sup> Enzensberger is playing havoc with Rilke.

There is a fourth connotation of "grube": "grave." The word is used explicitly in that meaning in line 97, where the poet writes that the German people will stay unaware "bis zur grube" ("until the grave"). The implication is that because of their political unawareness they may die in mass graves as the Nazi victims did. If we read Enzensberger's intricate poem as the palimpsest that it is, we apply this meaning of "grube" in line 8, which describes the poet as sitting "in der netten, zufriedenen grube," and in line 50, where the consumer calls "abwesend aus der grube." The unaware burghers are envisaged as already in their graves, like the Nazi victims who were forced to lie down in their graves before they were shot. Like the Nazi victims that had to lie down on top of those already executed, the unaware post-war Germans form a new layer of victims, supervening on the layers of those who had been killed by the Third Reich. As made explicit in lines 51 ff., it is the same *mördergrube*, even if they are separated from the Nazi victims through sound-proof pavement, trash chutes, and layers of stain-removing chemicals. They too will be covered by stain-removing materials—"that's our custom here"—and there arises an additional interpretation for the verse "das kommt davon daß es aufwärts geht": What "goes upward" is the pile of corpses.

<sup>8</sup> For Enzensberger's concern about Germany's re-armament, see his political essays, e.g., "Über die Schwierigkeit, ein Inländer zu sein," in *Deutschland, Deutschland, unter anderm Außerungen zur Politik* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1967), p. 13.

The last stanza in Enzensberger's poem makes it clear that "mördergrube" in line 52 also refers to the mass graves. The poet apostrophizes his country:

mördergrube, in die ich herzlich geworfen bin  
bei halbwegs lebendigem leib . . .  
(murderers' pit into which i've been heartily thrown  
still if barely half alive . . .)

143-4

The "herzlich" is a clear indication that "mördergrube" is an allusion to the idiom "aus seinem Herzen keine Mördergrube machen." In fact, line 143 seems to be a satirical pun on the gory imagery of the idiom. Whoever threw the poet, or rather his *persona*, into the "mördergrube" did so "heartily." In the light of the opening lines, where the speaker asks why his elders unsuspectingly brought him to this country where he now sits in the unquestioning "zufriedenen grube," it would appear that the poet is reproaching his elders the same way many young Germans put disturbing questions to their elders, who tried to keep the past hidden in the proverbial *mördergrube*. On the other hand, the line seems to be also an allusion to "Daniel in der Löwengrube" ("Daniel in the lions' den"). Like Daniel, the poet is too honest to please the powers that be—we could indeed say that he opens up the *mördergrube*—and, like Daniel, he is ready to put up a fight. I shall discuss the poet's fighting spirit later in this inquiry.

The allusions to Germany's gory past are elaborated in 84 ff.:

wie meine brüder, die tadel- und hilflosen pendler,  
wie sie mich reuen, die frommen gerichtsvollzieher,  
die gasmänner, wie sie waten zuhauf,  
mit ihren plombierzangen, wie sie stapfen,  
in ihren abwesenden stiefeln, durchs bodenlose,  
die gloriöle vorschriftsmäßig tief im genick . . .

This stanza is grammatically very intricate because *wie*, used four times in that stanza, can mean *like*, *as*, or *how*. One is inclined to read the first *wie* as *like*. The cities etc. have choked just *like* the poet's brothers, the blameless and helpless commuters. This is the way Hamburger translates the line. The verse, then, appears completely harmless. But as we read on, we begin to associate the men from the gas company with the operators of the gas chambers. They wear those notorious German jackboots. Being government-employed, they are dressed in martial-looking uniforms and official-looking caps which give them a sort of halo. The *plombierzangen* (sealing pincers), used for sealing and unsealing gas meters, immediately remind us of *plombieren* and *Plombe* (tooth-filling): the Nazi murderers extracted gold-fillings from the mouths of their victims. This implication can be found in my translation, if one places the accent on the second half of the compound noun "sealing pincers." Then the pincers become the instruments which sealed the fates of the victims. Also the "frommen gerichtsvollzieher" in line 85, who on the first level of meaning were "pious bailiffs"—so Hamburger

—appear now in a new light. “*Gerichtsvollzieher*” becomes associated with “(Todes-)Strafe *vollziehen*,” i.e., “to carry out the death sentence,” namely the Nazi executions. I rendered both levels of meaning in: “devoted executors of the law.”

The actual statement and the associations which it evokes blend into one interpretation. This means that the first *wie* cannot be translated as *like*. The new meaning is: “How my brothers, the blameless and helpless commuters, how they make me remorseful.” What led the reader to misinterpret the first line is the commuters’ epithet “*tadel- und hilflos*.” The commuters are “blameless and helpless” in the usual intransitive sense of these adjectives. But also intended is the less apparent transitive meaning: The commuters, upright and decent citizens—that is what “*tadellos*” means—did not blame the Nazi regime, nor did they help the victims. To make the transitive meaning somewhat less concealed, I translated the line as follows:

how my brothers the commuters blameless and help less.

Germany’s past is described as rotting in the garbage disposals (54 f.). The epithet “undigested” which I added in my translation renders the unpleasant reference to eating that is contained in “*müllschluck*er,” literally “garbage swallower.” “Undigested past” is also a term which is sometimes used in reference to Germany’s “*unbewältigte Vergangenheit*,” i.e., “unmastered past.” The past is hidden also under “*schalldichte pflaster*”:

. . . denn das ist wahr,  
was seine opfer, ganz gewöhnliche tote leute,  
aus der erde rufen, etwas laut- und erfolgloses,  
das an das schalldichte pflaster dringt  
von unten, und es beschlägt, daß es dunkel wird,  
fleckig, naß, bis eine lache es überschwemmt . . .

72-8

There is an almost concealed pun in line 75. “*Schalldichte pflaster*” does mean “soundproof pavement.” However, *pflaster* can also mean band-aid, or to use a British cognate, “(sticking) plaster.” The band-aid is put on to cover up the bloody past, which will however seep through and form a puddle of blood. My translation “sound-staunching pavement” attempts to reproduce the ambiguity through an association with blood-staunching bandages.

I noted above that Enzensberger inverts the Rilkean *Verinnerlichung* of those things that make man happy, by describing how Germany’s past is *verinnerlicht* both in a figurative and a literal sense: The past becomes a phenomenon which merely exists in the *Verinnerlichung* of the mind and can in that form be suppressed and drowned in *Gemütlichkeit*; in a physical sense, the crying past is hidden under the soundproof pavement, where however it is ineffectively buried so that it seeps through in the form of blood. This picture inverts Rilke’s description of how the poet’s voice calls the dead from their graves:

Siehe, da rief ich die Liebende. Aber nicht sie nur  
 käme . . . Es kämen aus schwächlichen Gräbern  
 Mädchen und ständen . . . Denn, wie beschränkt ich,  
 wie, den gerufenen Ruf? Die Versunkenen suchen  
 immer noch Erde. . . .  
 Glaubst nicht, Schicksal sei mehr, als das Dichte der Kindheit.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Siebente Elegie*, the poet calls only for his (living) lover, but his calls result in bringing out the dead. While the dead in Rilke's poem strive to remain buried but are magically drawn by the poet's voice, in *landessprache* it is the dead that are calling and, since their voices are unwanted, come out in a puddle of blood which actually floods the *Märchenwelt* of "rapunzel" and "allerleirauh." The reality of the unmastered past overpowers the Rilkean *Phantasiewelt*, which is destroyed through the ultimate macabre contrast between on the one hand Rilke's *Verinnerlichung*-postulating statement that "Schicksal sei [nicht] mehr, als das Dichte der Kindheit" and on the other the *Schicksal* (fate) of the Nazi victims. The flooding of *allerleirauh*—significantly the title of a collection of fairytales which Enzensberger edited—is an answer to a question which, in one form or another, has been asked time and again: "Poetry—after Auschwitz?"<sup>10</sup> Enzensberger's poem as a whole is an aesthetic answer to that question. And the answer which *landessprache* gives is essentially German: a "Verinnerlichung der unbewältigten Vergangenheit" in the form of language. The poem, then, is a demaskation of the ambivalence of the German language, i.e., the language of what is frequently and proudly referred to as the "Land der Dichter und Denker."

A similar demasking of the ambivalence of another traditional German trait had been previously attempted by Paul Celan. In his *Todesfuge*, Celan had portrayed a close affinity between the notion of the Germans' *Todeslust*—a notion fostered by Novalis, Wagner, Nietzsche, Hoffmannsthal, Rilke—and the Germans' preoccupation with, and excellence in, the field of music. *Todesfuge*, with its form approximating that of a fugue, depicts the markedly Teutonic murderer as obsessed with a love for music and his actions in the terms of musical activities:

er pfeift seine Rüden herbei  
 er pfeift seine Juden hervor läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der Erde  
 er befiehlt uns spielt auf nun zum Tanz

<sup>9</sup> Leishman translates the passage:

Look, I've been calling the lover. But not only she  
 would come . . . Out of unwithholding graves  
 girls would come and gather . . . For how could I limit  
 the call I had called? The sunken are always seeking  
 earth again. . . .

Don't think Destiny's more than what's packed into childhood.

<sup>10</sup> The title of Reinhard Lettau's University of California, San Diego inauguration speech, Spring 1968.

Er ruft spielt süßer den Tod der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland  
 er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft  
 dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken da liegt man nicht eng . . .

While Celan uses the language of poetry as a vehicle both to describe the horror of the concentration camps and to demask the ambivalent role of what for the purpose of comparison we will call *Landesmusik*, Enzensberger goes one step further and demasks the *landessprache*, i.e., the vehicle itself. While Celan's poem *describes* two objects (music, the horror of the concentration camps), in Enzensberger's poem the two objects on the one hand (the language, the concentration camp horrors) and the vehicle of description on the other have become identical: Not only does the poem, written in the *landessprache*, describe the *landessprache*, but the language actually constitutes the second object, the Nazi crimes. While *Todesfuge* describes crimes as occurring, no crimes appear within the situational framework of Enzensberger's poem. The Nazi crimes have become pure language, in a poem that talks about such innocent people as the men from the gas company and their innocent actions. Or viewed from the other end, the language by which everything is *verinnerlicht* and *vergeistigt* into the pure form of words, the language of the "Land der Dichter und Denker" is demasked—if a crude pun is permissible—as the "Landessprache der Richter und Henker" ("judges and hangmen").<sup>11</sup>

Hand in hand with *Verinnerlichung* goes the practice, considered typically German, of *Versachlichung*, objectivation. It is easier for one's conscience to deal with unpleasant things if one objectifies them and views them in the abstract. This is illustrated by the phrase "sachbearbeiter für die menschlichkeit":

sachbearbeiter für die menschlichkeit  
 in den kasernen für die kasernen für die kasernen. 106-7

There is a bitter contrast between the bureaucratic term "*sachbearbeiter*"—"spe-

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<sup>11</sup> I believe this crude pun merely makes explicit what is implicit in the poem. (For "judges and hangmen," see the following observations on "Endlösung.") Despite his satirical attacks on Germany, Enzensberger is not a Germanophobe. On the contrary, one might say that he attempts to be something like the conscience of his nation. Besides, in his essay "Über die Schwierigkeit, ein Inländer zu sein," Enzensberger makes it clear that, instead of seeing government-ordered mass murder as a national problem of the Germans, he views it as a manifestation of man's capacity for doing evil. He explicitly warns against making Auschwitz "zur deutschen Spezialität, zum Produkt einer hypothetischen deutschen Volksseele." It is his privilege as an artist to represent a country's crimes as *vergeistigt* into that country's language and even to deduce, *for the sake of his art*, that country's character from its language. However, it would be inappropriate to suggest from a *scholar's* point of view, as has been done by Willa Muir ("Translating from the German," in *On Translation*, ed. R. A. Brower, New York, 1966, p. 95), that one could actually "deduce Hitler's Reich from the . . . ruthless shape of the German sentence . . ."

cialists”; *Sache* means thing, object—and “*menschlichkeit*.” Since these specialists are envisaged as Gestapo-type agents working for the government—“*sachbearbeiter*” seems to contain an allusion to the innocently bureaucratic “*Endlösung*,” the “final solution” of the Jewish question—I brought in an association with the FBI, in addition to an Americanization of the next line:

and specialists from the federal bureau of humanization  
by the barracks of the barracks for the barracks.

The satire on the military is continued in line 145. “*Ich hadere, aber ich weiche nicht*” (“I argue but I do not give in”) is an inversion of the idiom “*ich wanke und ich weiche nicht*,” where both alliterating verbs mean practically the same (“I do not waver or give in”). The saying is to be conceived of as deriving from the language of the military, which would automatically make it a national idiom. By replacing the identity of the two alliterating verbs with a dichotomy (“protest” vs. “give in”), Enzensberger gives the military appeal for heroism his own twist. To use a corrupting pun on the U.S. Navy axiom which the “Love it or Leave it” ideologists have leveled at dissenters, who are invited to “shape up or ship out”: the poet will not “shut up nor ship out.”

Enzensberger is unsparing in his satire on nationalism. Lines 124-6:

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

punningly corrupt the German national anthem (“*Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles*”; Enzensberger will repeat this pun in the title of a collection of his political essays: “*Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm Äußerungen zur Politik*”<sup>12</sup>). Lines 124-6 also satirize the patriotic slogan: “*Deutschland, heilig Herz der Völker*” (“holy heart of the nations”). I rendered the idea by corrupting a line from an American patriotic song:

germany, germany, god shed *dis*grace on thee.

Enzensberger’s Germany is “*verrufen*,” notorious, infamous. However, there is a pun in “*ver-rufen*.” Germany has been hailed (“*gerufen*”) as the “*Deutschland über alles*” etc. so many times by so many patriotic lips that it has been hailed once too often. Taken literally, “*verrufen*” means just that, as is expressed through the intensifying prefix *ver*. My rendering is:

germany, germany, god shed disgrace on thee,  
hailed down to infamy from fall to fall  
below all ordinary people.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. n. 8 in this study. The title translates: “Germany, Germany among other things remarks on politics.”

Rendering the face-value meaning, Hamburger misses the mark:

germany, my country, unholy heart of the nations,  
pretty notorious, more so every day,  
among all ordinary people elsewhere.

“Unter” is ambiguous, meaning both “among” and “under(neath).” The ambiguity of “von fall, zu fall” has been discussed.

I resorted to the American national anthem in my rendering of line 63:

wo wir uns finden wohl unter blinden,  
in den schau-, kauf- und zeughäusern. 63-4

Line 63 parodies an idealistic German folksong: “Wo wir uns finden wohl unter Linden zur Abendzeit,” i.e., “where, in the evenings, we meet under the linden tree”). As the linden tree is considered the German national tree, so blindness is depicted as the national character, with blindness topping off idealism as well as *Verinnerlichung*. I translated the line:

in the land of the free and the home of the blind.

Hamburger’s translation, besides being too long and unrhythmical, would not carry any national implication for the American reader: “where on the bonny bonny banks we play blind man’s buff.”

The ambiguity in line 64 may not become clear until after several readings of what seems to be three compound nouns: *schauhäuser*, *kaufhäuser*, *zeughäuser*. “Zeughaus,” an outdated word meaning “arsenal,” is certainly an allusion to war industry. It certainly also implies the sale of “zeug” (“stuff” or “any old junk”). However, when the reader goes over the line again he realizes that the compound noun *schauhaus* does not really exist. (What does exist is “Schaufenster,” “shop window” or “show-case window.”) The only compound noun of the three that would appear to make good sense is *kaufhaus*, department store. Perhaps it is not until he has read the *dolce vita* scenes in 66 ff. that the reader recognizes a meaning which is also intended: what looks like the first halves of three compound nouns turns out to be three imperatives: “schau, kauf und zeug,” “look, buy and impregnate.” And lines 63-4 may contain an allusion to the seemingly erotic scenes in Walther von der Vogelweide’s *Unter der Linde*:

unter der linden  
an der heide,  
da unser zweier bette was,  
da muget ir vinden  
schone beide  
gebrochene bluomen unde gras

. . . . .

Do het er gemachet  
also riche  
von bluomen eine bettestat.

The picture of courtly love, where whatever transpires is idealized by the statement that the lovers "break flowers," is replaced by a picture which depicts love in a setting of consumer articles. Even love itself seems to have become a consumer item. Especially in view of the scenes implied in 66 ff., the reference in "zeughaus" may be to the supermarket-like brothels, where the merchandise is on display in what practically amounts to show-case windows. (And the word *zeugen* is usually applied to the male.) At the same time however, "zeughäuser" refers to the act of procreation; *zeugen* literally means "to procreate." This would be an allusion to the legendary "birth factories" under the Nazis, or more precisely, to the practices of a regime which actively encouraged population growth and awarded medals for excellence in that branch of productivity. This idea of "zeughaus" would blend well with the overt meaning of *zeughaus* as arsenal: "Deutschland braucht Soldaten"—"Germany needs soldiers"—was one of the slogans used to boost procreation. And this implication is conflated smoothly with the picture of a consumer society that propagates itself by voraciously buying "junk" and "stuff" in the department stores.

For "zeughaus" we have to find an American compound noun which has something to do with consumer society and the first half of which would combine with the two verbs into a (somewhat concealed) sexual meaning. My suggestion is: "in our look pay and lay away plan stores." Hamburger's rendering—"in exhibition rooms, arsenals, sale rooms"—is again too one-dimensional to come anywhere near the complex ambiguity of the original.

*Landessprache* is mainly a satire on West Germany. However, a word has to be said about Enzensberger's treatment of the problem of the division of Germany:

. . . dieses land, vor hunger rasend,  
zerrauft sich sorgfältig mit eigenen händen,  
dieses land ist von sich selbst geschieden,  
ein aufgetrenntes, inwendig geschiedenes herz,  
unsinnig tickend, eine bombe aus fleisch,  
eine nasse, abwesende wunde. 118-23

The whole country is "divided from itself," it is an "inwardly divided heart." It is suffering from a schizophrenia which the poet describes in physiological terms. The description of the divided Germany as an "absent wound" may imply that what Germans almost proudly refer to as the "deutsche Frage," the "question" of Germany's divided state, is non-existent, or at least irrelevant in the global range of world politics. This is the angle from which, in his political essays, Enzensberger views the German question, which he considers a ritual of self-comiseration in a country which "zerrauft sich sorgfältig mit beiden händen." The reflexive verb *sich raufen* means "to have a fight." It usually refers to children

who fight over trivia. However, the prefix *zer-* has an intensifying function: "sich zerrauen," which has lost the physical connotation, means that the quarrelling and quibbling—e.g., over the question whether East Germany should be recognized as "existing": this question may well be alluded to in "*abwesende wunde*"—leads to total alienation. There is also an allusion to the idiom "sich die Haare raufen" (or "sich mit beiden Händen die Haare raufen"), to pull or touse one's hair in self-reproaching, or self-punishing, anger. This idea is applicable here if we take East and West Germany as one country where one part reproaches the other. This "tousling" is done "sorgfältig," ("meticulously"). I tried to incorporate the different ideas by rendering: "this country, with its own hands, carefully argues itself to pieces."

The foregoing discussion contains only a few milestones in a Joycean odyssey. Translating the poem, then re-reading it over and again, each time discovering new ambiguities, new associations, new levels of meaning which had to be rendered in the translation, the author of this paper reached the point where he began to wonder whether he was not reading into the poem meanings that Enzensberger had not intended to be there. He began to doubt his ability to understand what seemed to be plain and simple German, his own *landessprache*. But that is exactly the idea of the poem: The author felt as though he had reached the poet's confused state of mind, as though he too had become a victim of the *landessprache*. Quite contrary to Levenson's critique, Enzensberger's structureless display of puns and his magpie hoard of images, associations and allusions are precisely to the point. As Enzensberger makes explicit in his *gebrauchsanweisung*, the poet uses them to depict his compatriots as *he, the artist, sees* them: "also, von gescheckter art" ("and therefore as being of a magpie-colored variety"). Any portrayal of something that is seen as a magpie-colored variety is bound to be confusing.

"Von gescheckter art" is Enzensberger's rendering of the term which, in his *historia naturalis*, Pliny had used to describe the motley character of the Athenians, whom the painter Parrhasius had attempted to portray: "ostendebat namque *varium . . . et omnia pariter*." By printing Pliny's lines as a motto for his poem *landessprache*, Enzensberger seems to insinuate that he will attempt a precept which poets before him had hotly debated, the precept of *ut pictura poesis*. In his *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, Lessing had tried to sweep away the confusion concerning the proper provinces of poetry and painting, a confusion which had arisen from too literal a reading of Horace's "ut pictura poesis." Lessing's essay was a reply to Winckelmann's unfavorable comparison of Virgil's description of Laocoon and his sons with the famous sculpture. Lessing had pointed out that, while the sculptor uses the medium of space and thus can represent everything simultaneously, the poet has to express himself in a sequence of time. The poet is at a similar disadvantage when compared with the painter, whose artifact the viewer's eye can take in *in toto* and simultaneously. However, there is one flaw in this theory concerning pictorial representation, and Enzensberger seems to capitalize on this flaw. When looking at a painting, the eye does not really absorb all the details at the same time and

with the same intensity, it has to travel back and forth so that it eventually retains, not one whole picture, but something like a layer of superimposed pictures. Now, the ordinary reading of a poem does not require that the reader's eye go back and forth. Yet, as I have demonstrated, Enzensberger's poem achieves similar superimpositional effects through its palimpsestic character. Like Parrhasius, Enzensberger portrays his compatriots in their magpie-colored variety "et omnia pariter": "and all this simultaneously." In fact, Enzensberger's frivolously expanded rendering of *et omnia pariter* as "und zwar all das auf einmal und zugleich" seems to be a sly allusion to the representational simultaneousness afforded by the painter's medium, in addition to referring to the simultaneous representation of diverse and even contradictory character traits in Parrhasius' portrayal of the Athenians.

The implication for *landessprache* of the motto from Pliny is that the character traits of the nation which Enzensberger will depict seem to contradict each other but that they all constitute the nation whose "magpie-colored variety" is too confusing to be fully understood and represented objectively in a work of art. Enzensberger makes this idea explicit by interpolating a short sentence into his translation of the motto: "er (nämlich parrhasius) wolte sie (nämlich seine landsleute) so darstellen, wie sie ihm vorkamen" ("as they appeared to him"). By his addition, Enzensberger seems to admit that, unlike Parrhasius who thought he was painting an objective picture, the poet will portray his *landsleute* as they appear to him on the basis of their *landessprache*: an association is apparently intended between "landsleute" and "landessprache." Enzensberger will show the character of the German people by describing, in their language, the national character as he, subjectively, sees it reflected in their confusing language.

The aim of this study has been to investigate how Enzensberger, using the vehicle of *landessprache*, attempts to paint a picture of the *landessprache* as well as of the people who speak that language. Poets before Enzensberger had attempted the precept of "ut pictura poesis." Celan had, in his representation of German national traits, tried his hand at an "ut musica poesis." In a poem which deals with the same topic as Celan's, Enzensberger employs what we may call the precept of "poesis ut lingua populi." Yet he does not represent his samples of the *lingua populi* in a sequence of time; apparently fusing the "ut musica poesis" with the "ut pictura poesis" and incorporating the lesson gained from Lessing's criticisms of the latter precept, Enzensberger presents us with a palimpsestic piece of hyperidiomatic poetry that can be compared to a magnetic tape on which several voices have been recorded simultaneously.