

## The Lyrification of Science etc.: On Some Aspects of H. M. Enzensberger's Poetry

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*for Sabine*

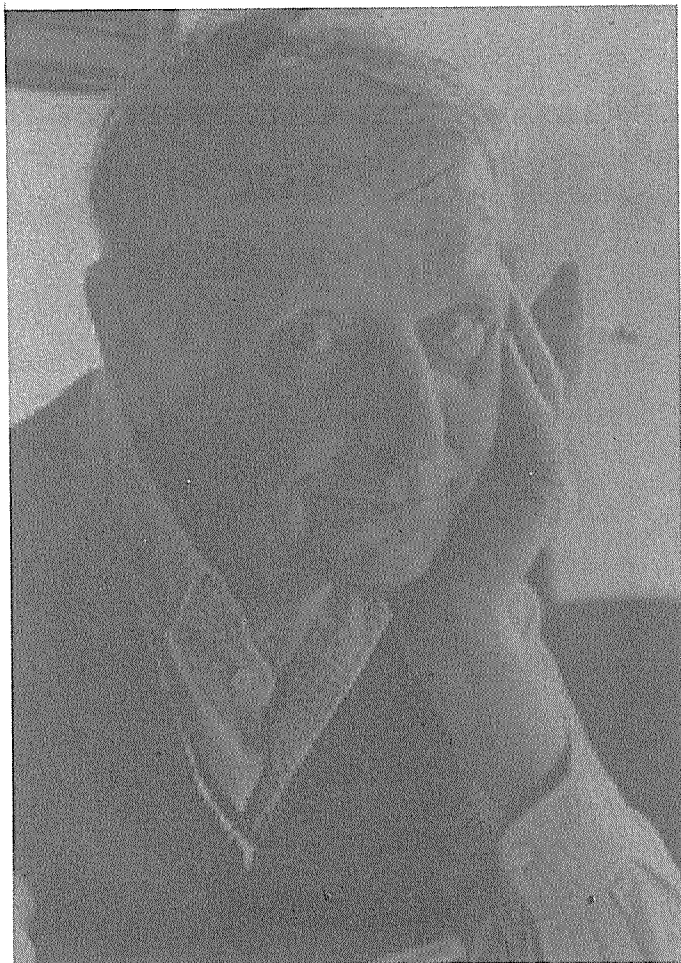
### บทคัดย่อ

เป็นที่ยอมรับกันมานานแล้วว่า ฮันส์ มักนุส เอนเซนส์แบร์เกอร์ (เกิด 1929) เป็นกวีและนักเขียนความเรียงระดับนำในโลกของภาษาเยอรมัน ข้อหนึ่งในบรรดาคุณสมบัติที่เขาได้ทำไว้ให้กับโลกของวรรณกรรมอย่างน่าทึ่งและโดดเด่นที่สุดก็คือ ความพยายามอันประสบความสำเร็จ – ที่จริงต้องเรียกว่า อันน่าพิศวง ในการเชื่อมโยงเอาอาณาบริเวณระหว่างกวีนิพนธ์กับวิทยาศาสตร์สมัยใหม่ ที่ดูราวกับว่าจะไม่เหมือนกันและไม่อาจกลับมาอยู่ร่วมกันได้ อาณาบริเวณดังเช่นที่ศัพท์ของซี. พี. สโนว์ที่เกือบจะเป็นสำนวนไปแล้วเรียกว่า “สองวัฒนธรรม” นี้ให้เข้าด้วยกันใหม่ได้ บทความนี้จะสำรวจความพยายามอันเด่นเฉพาะและเปี่ยมพลังดังกล่าวนี้ โดยมีตัวอย่างมากมาย ซึ่งโดยส่วนใหญ่มาจากหนังสือรวมบทกวีเล่มล่าสุดของเขาในปี 2003 ที่ชื่อว่า *Die Geschichte der Wolken* (ประวัติของก้อนเมฆ) รวมถึงพัฒนาการดังกล่าวที่ดำเนินมานานนับปีและนับทศวรรษ อันลงเอยที่ความลงตัวของบทกวีเกี่ยวกับทฤษฎีความไร้ระเบียบ ซึ่ง

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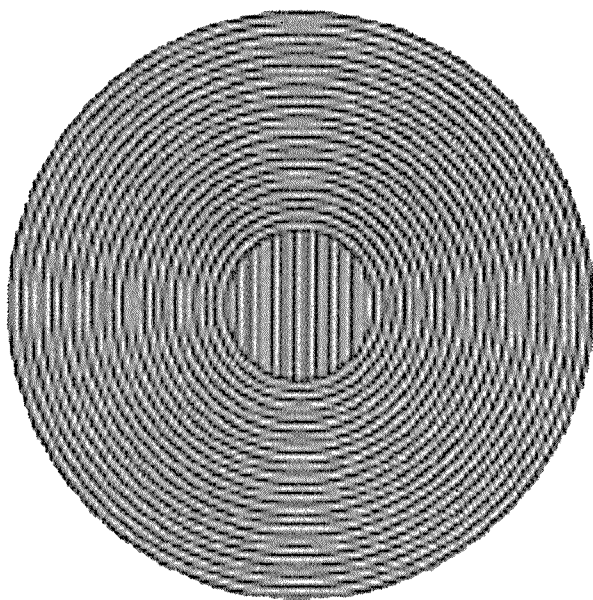
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กองบรรณาธิการขอขอบคุณ น.ส.ทิพวัลย์ แสงส่อง ที่ช่วยพิมพ์บทความนี้ให้



Hans Magnus Enzensberger

**Hans Magnus Enzensberger**  
**DIE GESCHICHTE**  
**DER WOLKEN**



๑๑ Meditationen  
Suhrkamp

เป็นทฤษฎีอันโด่งดังในปัจจุบัน นอกจากนี้ บทความนี้จะได้อภิปรายและบรรยายถึงเรื่องนวัตกรรมของตัวกวีผู้หนึ่งและการสร้างสรรค์ที่เกี่ยวข้องกันในเรื่องประเภทของนวนิยายที่เรียกว่า “เพลงขับที่เป็นร้อยแก้ว” ผลงานของเอนเซนส์แบร์เกอร์ได้รับการแปลเป็นภาษาต่าง ๆ ไม่ต่ำกว่ายี่สิบสี่ภาษา และได้รับการเสนอชื่อเพื่อพิจารณารับรางวัลโนเบลในปัจจุบัน

## Abstract

Hans Magnus Enzensberger (born 1929) has long been regarded as the leading poet and essayist writing in the German language. One of his most remarkable and outstanding contributions to world literature is his successful, indeed stunning, attempt at reuniting the seemingly disparate and irreconcilable realms of poetry and modern science, i.e., of C.P. Snow's near proverbial “two cultures.” The present article investigates—with a wealth of examples mainly from Enzensberger's most recent collection of poems, *Die Geschichte der Wolken* (“The History of the Clouds”) of 2003—these unique and seminal endeavors, including their development over the years and decades which culminates in the lyrical appropriation of present-day chaos theory. In addition, the poet's equally innovative and closely related creation of the novel genre of the “prose ballad” is discussed and illustrated. Enzensberger, whose works have been translated into over two dozen languages, is now being considered for the Nobel Prize. (RG)

In what seems to be the towering lyricist's—and essayist's—most recent contribution to verse, the volume *Die Geschichte der Wolken: 99 Meditationen* (“The History of the Clouds: 99 meditations”) of 2003, there appears a fairly brief yet quite suggestive, indeed programmatic, poem. Its heading, “Wer's glaubt,” might be rendered as “Who'd Believe It” in English, based as it is, laconically and somewhat cryptically, on a proverbial idiom of biblical origin that jokingly indicates doubt and disbelief. The source is Marc 16:16,

reading in part, and both in Martin Luther's translation and in the Authorized Version: "Wer da glaubet..., wird selig werden..." (*He that believeth... shall be saved*); the respective German idiom runs, "Wer's glaubt, wird selig."

In this poem, which clearly reveals itself as a confessional one, Hans Magnus Enzensberger (born in the Swabian province of Bavaria in 1929, and living in Munich) tells us the following:

Die einen hassen es, sich zu wundern.  
Dann wundern sie sich,  
wenn wir ihre Wissenschaft öde finden.  
Die andern möchten es nicht so genau wissen  
und ärgern sich,  
wenn wir von ihren Wundern nichts wissen wollen.  
Astralleib, M-Theorie, Karma, Künstliche Intelligenz:  
Ich weiß nicht, was mir lieber ist,  
die Verheißungen der Eingeweihten  
oder die Wunder der Wissenschaft.  
Geduldig höre ich den einen wie den anderen zu,  
stunden- und jahrelang.

Aber glaubt ja nicht, daß ich euch glaube!

Wundern kann ich mich selber.<sup>1</sup>

*(There are certain ones who hate to be wondering.  
Then they wonder  
that we find their knowledge and science humdrum.  
There are others who don't like to know it so intimately  
and who get angry  
that we don't want to know anything of their wonders.*

*Astral body, M theory, karma, artificial intelligence:  
I do not know what I prefer,  
the promises of the initiated  
or the wonders of knowledge and science.*

*Patiently, I listen to the ones as well as the others  
for hours and years on end.*

*But don't you dare believe that I believe you!*

*Wondering: that I can do on my own.)<sup>2</sup>*

As must be obvious, my version of Enzensberger's poem is a bit liberal, granted. Or, perhaps, I should rather call it explicatory, for the author constantly plays on the juxtaposition of the notions of "wundern" and "wissen" and their joint opposition to the concept of "glauben," all of which—and even more so, what it implies—is not very easy to translate. (It accounts, among other things, for my rendition of "Wissenschaft" as both *knowledge* and *science*.) Thus, *karma*, for instance, a term associated with metempsychosis in Hinduism and Buddhism, as is well known, belongs to the vast domain of initiatory experience and its priests and prophets, whereas *M theory*, let alone *artificial intelligence*, derive from the rational realm of science and its proponents, although the former *promise*, who knows, scientific insights and solutions while the latter may offer visions not altogether dissimilar to the *astrals* of theosophy. The poet feels half bored, half fascinated by either; he has listened to them for years or, more likely, decades; however, he maintains his reservations and qualms, withholds his *belief*, but still continues to accumulate *knowledge* and critically to *wonder*. In the poem immediately preceding "Wer's glaubt," Enzensberger even went so far as to equate the host of modern scientists downright with ancient augurs—"Auguren" is, in fact, its title—and to portray them according, if tongue in cheek [cf. 120]. In short, he unfolds a paradoxical dialectic, an ironic and contradictory interplay of "Wissen" (*knowledge*, yet including that of so-called miracles) and "Wissenschaft" (plain *science* proper, especially the natural sciences) which he keeps on observing attentively, albeit with utter skepticism.

There is more, though, both in an emphatic and ultimately decisive sense. For, what cannot but strike the reader as most amazing is the simple and undeniable truth that Enzensberger sovereignly

succeeds in transforming such topics—which are normally, and in various of his own writings, too, restricted to essayistic treatment—into something that isn’t outlandish or inaccessible at all, much less boring: namely, consummate and flawless, captivating and stimulating poetry. He does reveal himself as a *poeta doctus*, no question about it, yet not, or merely, in the gown of a humanist (that wouldn’t be so new) but also, indeed primarily, in the coat of a researcher who deals with science as well as with many other fields, encompassing, for example, sociology and economics no less than mathematics and astronomy, and a lot of oddities and forgotten or unheard-of details to boot, both facts and deeds as well as characters and occurrences, whether scientific and technological or otherwise. And still, this dyed-in-the-wool polyhistor proves to be and always remain a fine and accomplished lyricist all the same. Nothing else was the reason why I coined a neologism of sorts and resorted to shirtsleeve colloquial speech when phrasing my title. Yes, Enzensberger’s is a ‘lyrification of science etc.’ and in his 2003 collection of poems more than ever.

As witness, I trust, already the aforequoted lines, at least to some extent. But while their gist is formal only or, as it were, methodological, there exist lines, poems, indeed whole cycles of verse in Enzensberger’s sizable lyrical output—and, to repeat, in his *Geschichte der Wolken* in particular—that are far richer, far more interesting, even stunning, to put it mildly. Who would have thought, after all, of composing a rhapsody (which then changes to a kind of elegy) on the everyday element lead? Yet here it is—entitled, precisely and lapidarily, “Blei” (Lead”):

When they were shiny still and came hot from the foundry,  
the letters, they were poisonous.  
A metal, glistening when fresh,  
tarnishing, a bluish gray, in the air,  
heavy and so soft  
that a fingernail will scratch it.  
Finely ground, it catches fire  
spontaneously, blows up. Besides,

it lives in outdated batteries, lenses, fuses,  
 in buckshot, the stained-glass windows of churches,  
 shines in crystal and Bohemian glass.  
 Fireworkers need it even today.  
 Red lead, white lead: dangerous colors  
 in old pictures, and at the end of each year  
 it serves for oracles. In human bones, too,  
 it tends to settle; colics, a feeble,  
 slow and hard pulse, tremor,  
 dizziness and blue devils;  
 a saturnine poison that makes us proof  
 against other poisons which are unseen,  
 it's in the heavy apron  
 which the pretty nurse in  
 her white coat arranges around us  
 when we are spitting blood. [126]

Evidently, this remarkable poem speaks for itself; it doesn't need a commentary nor even the evidence of its original German. Its text and the translation thereof suffice.

Things are different in several respects, as we shall presently see, with Enzensberger's verse "Von den Vorzügen der Endlichkeit" ("On the Advantages of Finiteness"). It stems, as does the majority of my examples for the time being, again from his volume of 2003, and it runs as follows:

Mit dem Unendlichen ist nicht gut Kirschen essen.  
 Wer sich darauf einläßt, dem schwindelt;  
 er schwindelt, indem er die Wahrheit sagt.  
 Armer Achill, unerreichbare Schildkröte!  
 Daß es nicht aufhört, das Unendliche,  
 dabei bleibt es ja nicht: Grade hat es,  
 unendlich viele, mächtiger als der eine  
 der andere, von Aleph null bis Aleph unendlich.  
 Das hat, bevor er im Irrenhaus starb,  
 der arme Cantor bewiesen; und einer,



der sich noch besser darauf verstand,  
Gödel aus Brunn —am Ende aß er nichts mehr,  
und wie ein Fötus zusammengekauert,  
ist er verhungert auf seiner Matratze. Ja,  
sogar die Verdammnis, die ewig ist,  
sowie das ewige Leben, beide wären sie  
nur zu genießen mit äußerster Vorsicht.  
Allerhand nämlich hat es für sich,  
daß das, was vorbei ist, vorbei ist.  
Endlich sei, heißt es, selbst unser Universum,  
und von der Natur (wie von den Göttinnen,  
ihren älteren Schwestern) gilt:  
immer erst in der Beschränkung zeigt  
die Meisterin sich, in diesen Kirschen  
zum Beispiel, dort auf dem Teller,  
endlich vielfarbig, wie sie sind,  
lack-, scharlach-, türkisch-, granat-,  
mohn-, wein- und blutrot:  
Morgen schon ist es aus mit ihnen,  
aus und vorbei. Du mußt sie essen  
jetzt oder nie. [110f.]

Any attempt at a fair rendition of this text will, of necessity, result in an approximation at best. Nonetheless, I hope mine might perhaps be adequate enough for our purposes. Please compare:

It's difficult and dangerous to deal with the infinite.  
Whoever lets himself in for it is getting giddy,  
tells fibs by telling the truth.  
Poor Achilles, unattainable turtle!  
That it doesn't end, the infinite,  
that's by far not the end of it: it possesses degrees,  
infinitely many, the following ever mightier  
than the preceding, from aleph-null to aleph-infinite.  
Such was demonstrated, before he died  
in a madhouse, by poor Cantor; and one

who was still better at it, Gödel  
 from Brno—in the end, he didn't eat  
 any longer, and, huddled up like a fetus,  
 starved on his mattress. Indeed,  
 even damnation, which is eternal,  
 as well as life everlasting: either  
 might be enjoyed only with the utmost precaution.  
 Namely, a lot can be said for the fact that  
 that which is over, is over.  
 Even our universe is, allegedly, finite,  
 and as to Nature (and likewise to the goddesses,  
 her elder sisters), the maxim applies:  
 Always it is but by limitation  
 that a master is proved, as, for instance, by dealing  
 with those cherries there on that plate,  
 finitely variegated as they are,  
 Turkey red, crimson, claret, garnet, scarlet,  
 red as poppies, as blood:  
 Already tomorrow it's all over with them,  
 over and finished. You have to eat them  
 now or never.

That this is, once more, a rather free translation ought to go without saying. But what can one do in view of so complex and compact a text but vary and paraphrase the Enzensbergerian wording, indeed juggle it?

First and foremost, however, a few clarifications and/or factual explications will be in order. The line about Achilles and the unattainable turtle refers, of course, to that famous paradox put forward by the Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea (ca. 495-ca.430 B.C.) according to which the fleet-footed hero will never be able to catch up with a turtle. The two other names are, in all likelihood, less familiar; still, the function and fate of those two men are beyond doubt: (Georg) Cantor, on the one hand, and (Kurt) Gödel, born in Brno (Brünn in German) in what is now the Czech Republic, on the other, were influential mathematicians from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, respectively, who

arrived at their wits' end when trying to have a grip on the infinite. A fourth name, infinitely more familiar and famous than either Cantor's or Gödel's, and equaled solely by that of Achilles, is being passed over in silence by Enzensberger; despite appearances, though, its presence is unmistakable. Namely, the maxim that a master is always proved but by limitation constitutes an allusion to —and, in part, cryptoquotation from— Johann Wolfgang (von) Goethe's sonnet "Natur und Kunst" ("Nature and Art") the penultimate line of which reads: "in der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister" (in Michael Hamburger's rendition: *None proves a master but by limitation*).<sup>3</sup> Enzensberger's female "Meisterin" —for his personified Nature is, naturally, a feminine noun in German— adds a neat if slightly ironical feministic touch to the poem's conclusion, by the way. Furthermore, two puns or plays on both the figurative and concrete senses of words or expressions must be mentioned because they prove to be totally untranslatable: firstly, the verb "schwindeln" (*to fib* or *to cheat* but, with dative, *to be giddy* or *to get dizzy*) in lines 2/3; secondly, the idiom "mit jemandem ist nicht gut Kirschen essen" (lit. *it's not easy [or not without risk] to eat cherries with someone*) meaning *he is an unpleasant customer to deal with* or *he is a difficult person to get along with* in lines 1 and 24ff., which provides the overall image that serves, most ingeniously indeed, as a frame for the entire poem.

The message of "Von den Vorzügen der Endlichkeit" should be clear and unequivocal. Mathematics, philosophy, even theology cannot help failing most miserably when confronted with the insoluble riddle of infinity. That which the poem advocates instead is as modest or limited as it is tangible, nay edible: the "Kirschen" evoked in the opening line. And they, in turn, might evoke the Horatian *carpe diem* from *Odes* I, xi (lit. *pluck the day*; pluck it, figuratively speaking, as you would cherries, and relish it accordingly). But might one not likewise be reminded of Voltaire's *Il faut cultiver notre jardin* from Chapt.30 of his *Candide*? With anticipatory reason, so to speak, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, not quite twenty-eight years of age, invoked the Frenchman's disillusioned hero in his poem "Candide," which figures prominently in his very first book of verse, *Verteidigung der Wölfe* ("In Defense of the Wolves") of 1957. He didn't adduce

cherries then, it is true; yet “[die] lieblichen Aprikosen” (*lovely apricots*) he so lavishly praised, along with similar pleasures and enjoyments, doubtless achieved exactly the selfsame aim.<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, Enzensberger’s poetic meditations on infinity and the advantages of finiteness are of a general, somewhat timeless nature, provoked as they were by the endeavors of sundry disciplines and their approaches, both from science or scholarship and beyond. In most other cases, however, he is more or less specific and stays within the confines of a single field or area. For instance, his poem “Astrolabium” (“Astrolabe”) pictures the instruments and practices of an earlier and, nowadays, not only old-fashioned but also, as everybody appears to agree, completely outdated and outworn astronomy and even astrology, contrasting it with what he deems the (ominous) essence and (fateful) consequences of present-day astronomy or even astrophysics. Just consider:

Tympanum, mater and limbus:  
bygone words made of brass.  
Who would know, after all, how to measure,  
by means of alidade, spider and rule,  
the altitude of the sun, Bohemian  
and Babylonian hours, how to determine  
the constellations’ positions  
with bare hands?

The engraved picture of the celestial sphere  
on the planisphere, with azimuths,  
almucantarates and horizon,  
and circling above it a delicate net  
of thin crosspieces at whose points  
Aldebaran, Rigel, Antares and Vega  
can be seen. When turned round,  
zodiac and shadow quadrant allow to  
cast and calculate horoscopes, to discern  
the height of peaks and towers.

A calendar, an ingenious sidereal clock,  
an oracle, an analogous computer  
that sleeps in a museum —junk  
for astronomers who don't see anything  
anymore. Solely the discolored shades on the screen  
and endless columns of numbers.  
Ever more deeply, a science gone blind is gazing  
at ever more distant galaxies. [122f.]

As before, when facing the Enzensbergerian description and contemplation of the element lead and what it is fraught with, we could safely leave it at that. No explanation seems to be necessary —or hardly any, to be precise. For it should perhaps be pointed out that the poem's enigmatic hint at "Bohemian hours" constitutes, in all probability, a hidden allusion to the Danish astronomer and astrologer Tycho (de) Brahe (1546-1601) and his activities at the imperial court of Rudolf II in Prague, whereas the joint "Babylonian hours," at least in this context, ought to be self-explanatory. Incidentally, and in addition to Brahe —"Tyge," as the author dutifully spells the Dane's first name— as well as, particularly, to Brahe's rank and lot in the development of modern science where he was so spectacularly superseded by the German Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) who is likewise cited in *Die Geschichte der Wolken*, Enzensberger once devoted a full two pages to that scholar from Denmark and his life and work in the doubly innovative volume *Mausoleum: Siebenunddreißig Balladen aus der Geschichte des Fortschritts* ("Mausoleum: Thirty-Seven Ballads from the History of Progress") of 1975... to which, needless to emphasize, we'll have to come back. For not only does it break fresh poetic, or poetological, ground through the bold inclusion of novel subject matter, but it boldly proposes, and indulges in, novelties of form and genre as well. Both expansive efforts go hand in hand in Enzensberger's unusual *Mausoleum*. Said text on Brahe, at any rate, apart from displaying the new generic shape and structure, contains, however subdued, the programmatic and highly significant exclamation "Big Science" (which appears in English even in the German original)!<sup>5</sup>

Skeptically, indeed scathingly, to contrast the ‘inhuman’ aspects of progressive science or technology with the more ‘humane’ though simpler if not simplistic ones of its predecessors —or, for that matter, with the bare and dire facts of human existence— is a dominant feature, from the outset and at large, of Enzensberger’s thought and his ensuing attitudes and judgments. As early as 1957, in the aforementioned volume *Verteidigung der Wölfe*, he published his poem “Fremder Garten” (“Strange [but also ‘Alien’ or ‘Foreign’] Garden”), one of the first ever to expose ecological problems and their threat.<sup>6</sup> The same universality holds true for Enzensberger’s deft and subtle rhetorical devices and his both brilliant and abundant imagery, as is amply testified to, once again in his earliest book of verse already, by his fulminant diatribe “Bildzeitung” (lit. “Pictorial [i.e., ‘Illustrated’] Newspaper,” a notorious tabloid, or exemplar of the yellow press, in the Federal Republic of Germany).<sup>7</sup> Or take the six to seven strophes of “Genetik” (“Genetics”) from the collection at hand [cf. 14] which successfully employ —a veritable *tour de force*— merely two rhymes for no fewer than sixteen verses. Moreover, albeit conversely, the two concluding punch lines of “Astrolabium,” here rendered as “Ever more deeply, a science gone blind is gazing/at ever more distant galaxies,” run in their German wording:

Immer tiefer, in immer fernere Galaxien  
blickt die erblindete Wissenschaft.

Doubtless, the contradiction though, nevertheless, simultaneous conjunction of a frenetic stare and total blindness in every respect could scarcely be expressed more aptly and poignantly than by the Enzensbergerian alliteration plus assonance “*blickt/erblindet*.”

Yet another poetical sleight of hand, not unlike that in “Bildzeitung” or “Genetik,” is provided by the two stanzas of “Profane Offenbarung” (“A Profane Revelation”). For who would fancy that this poem from *Die Geschichte der Wolken* amounts, or boils down, to a eulogy in praise of our common refrigerator? But the biblical and overall religious echoes of its heading are surely not accidental; just compare:

Snow-white tabernacle,  
even to the eternal  
drunkard you grant mercy,  
in less than no time you give  
the sinful woman absolution  
and enlighten the sleepless  
that are kneeling before you, in your  
bright reflection, nightly comfort  
of the thirsty sweet auxiliary  
of all starvelings!

Full of promises, you reveal yourself  
to the needy one, tiny,  
icy Garden of Eden!  
You bless the pilgrim with manna, with  
fresh peaches, with bunches of grapes,  
with glistening cherries and wine.  
Altar or icebox:  
confronted with the choice,  
many a pious belief, believe me,  
would begin to falter. [25]

Enzensberger's ironically pious terms "Tabernakel," "Gnade" (*mercy* or *grace*), "Sünderin" (*sinful woman*), "Absolution," "Garten Eden," "Manna," "Pilger," and so on and so fourth: all are, without fail, eloquent enough, as is the sublime irony of his culminating antithesis, "Altar oder Kühlschrank" (*altar or icebox*). As for the seemingly harmless vocable *auxiliary* in the first strophe, one has to note that the German name "Nothelfer" designates the —or one of the— fourteen auxiliary saints of catholic lore, popular and venerated especially in Bavaria. On the other hand, lo and behold, even the momentous cherries we found in "Von den Vorzügen der Endlichkeit" reemerge from Enzensberger's paean to the refrigerator, though not combined or associated with any Voltairean apricots but, equally telling, with kindred peaches and grapes. Not modern science, then, but everyday

modern technology is conjured up as a profane revelation in those stanzas, nor does the poet proceed in an outright satirical, but rather in a lenient, good-hearted, near moving vein.

The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the cycle “Die Geschichte der Wolken,” which evidently supplied the title for Enzensberger’s 2003 volume in its entirety. Comprising twelve poems of varying length and structure, either stanzaic or as an uninterrupted block like “Von den Vorzügen der Endlichkeit,” these poems are his major contribution to lyrical meteorology. However, one of them must, and will, suffice as an appropriate illustration. It is No.8, and it reads, both in its German urtext and in my English version:

“Nie kann das Meer der Lüfte  
den echten Naturforscher kalt lassen,”  
sagte sich einst Mr Howard,  
der am Tottenham Green  
seine Pillen drehte,  
milden Anstalten zugeneigt.  
Zum Aufklärer gereift  
und zum Wolkenjäger,  
brachte er, was am Himmel wehte,  
entschieden in Ordnung:  
Haarlocken, Schichten und Haufen,  
bestimmte das Unbestimmte,  
und schränkte es ein, “wodurch  
die Gegenstände gestempelt werden.”  
Doch auch lateinisch getauft  
fahren sie fort, zu tun,  
was sie wollen, die Wolken,  
keine der andern gleich,  
niemandes Mündel. Schwierig,  
den Himmel zu stempeln. Ach,  
nicht unbedingt, braver Howard,  
ist es dir zu verdanken,  
daß es aufklart, zuweilen. [139]



*("The aerial ocean can never  
leave a real scientist cold,"  
Mr. Howard once said to himself,  
who, at Tottenham Green,  
made his pills and favored  
charitable institutions.  
A mature, enlightened, clear-sighted man  
and a hunter of clouds,  
he established order, decisively,  
in that which flew through the sky:  
locks of hair, layers, clusters;  
he defined what was undefined and  
limited it, "whereby  
the objects are being labeled."  
Yet even baptized in Latin,  
they continue to do  
whatever they wish, the clouds,  
not a single one like the other,  
nobody's ward. A tough job,  
to label the sky. Ah,  
not necessarily, honest Howard,  
are we indebted to you  
if it's clearing up, sometimes.)*

This poem is interesting and noteworthy in various regards, poetologically as well as scientifically. First and foremost, and the express naming of Howard notwithstanding, it was not prompted by the Britisher Luke Howard (1772-1864) but, undoubtedly, by Enzensberger's fellow countryman and writer, Goethe, himself not merely a great lyricist, playwright and novelist but, as everyone knows or ought to know, a versatile scientist to boot (just think of the intermaxillary bone, the *os intermaxillare*, which he detected in 1784, or of the mineral goethite). As a matter of fact, his was already a 'lyrification of science' of sorts, for not only —among, mind you, other pertinent things— did he pen and publish a short piece of prose

on Howard and his achievements, but he actually composed a whole series, or cycle, of verse devoted and dedicated to him (cf. “Howards Ehrengedächtnis” [“In Honorable Commemoration of Howard”] and “Trilogie zu Howards Wolkenlehre” [“A Trilogy about Howard’s “Nephology”]).<sup>8</sup> What Goethe knew above all, perhaps exclusively, was Howard’s “Essay on Modification of Clouds” of 1803, which he had carefully studied, and whose author he admired and lauded as the man “der Wolken unterschied” (*who distinguished clouds*); and Enzensberger for his part drew on the Goethean words repeatedly, here as elsewhere in his cycle “Die Geschichte der Wolken.” He even inserted, to all intents and purposes, a near verbatim cryptoquotation from the master’s trilogy in his poem. Namely, while Goethe has, “[Howard] bestimmt das Unbestimmte, schränkt es ein,” Enzensberger, simply changing the tense and adding a particle, says, “[er] bestimmte das Unbestimmte, und schränkte es ein” (*[he] defined what was undefined, and limited [or modified] it*).<sup>9</sup> Besides, the poet translated, most literally at that, the Englishman’s Latin terms *cirrus*, *stratus* and *cumulus* into German, thus alienating them, as it were: to wit, “Haarlocken, Schichten und Haufen” (*locks of hair, layers and clusters*), respectively. To top it all off, he permitted himself a threefold playful punning in the lines which read, “Zum Aufklärer gereift und zum Wolkenjäger,” rendered by me —surprisingly, I suppose, at first view— as *A mature, enlighten, clear-sighted man and a hunter of clouds*. However, “Aufklärer” means both *a man of the Enlightenment* and *reconnaissance plane*, and a “Jäger” is not only a *hunter* but likewise a *fighter plane*. (As to the technical term “aufklart [sic]” [*clearing up*] in the last line, the reason for my choice of the corresponding adjective *clear-sighted* should be obvious.)

I am not going to belabor any rhetorical or poetic subtleties in this text, such as the typical alliteration plus assonance “was sie wollen, die Wolken” (*whatever they wish, the clouds*); also, the meteorological everydayness and familiarity of a suchlike topic as clouds (with an occasional thunderstorm or accompanying rain, hail or snow as they emerge from other poems of the Enzensbergerian cycle) needs no explanation, much less a meticulous elaboration,

considering the quotidian weathercast in particular. In addition, “Die Geschichte der Wolken 8,” indeed the entire series, seems to be characterized, as already intimated, by a fairly benign mood and attitude; it is devoid of the usual, and often quite biting, satire or criticism while surely not free from skepticism, reservations and irony. What is unusual albeit not totally singular in Enzensberger’s poetizing, though, is the unbridled, almost wanton playfulness that manifests itself in his ambiguous usage of the military —and, by implication, political— connotations of “Aufklärer” and “-jäger” as, respectively, reconnaissance or fighter planes. For, as a rule, the poet feels and reacts very differently when taking up things political or military: namely, in a bitter, deadly serious manner. Most piercingly, this comes to the fore in two poems printed side by side with each other, “Kindersoldaten” and “Interferenz.” The former, “Children as Soldiers,” harks back to the final stages of World War II, at least with its first strophe:

How it was itching, greenish like mold,  
the woody soldier’s tunic  
on the bare skin.  
Not seventeen years of age yet,  
the enthusiasm for death  
shining metallically  
from his blue eyes.  
A *werwolf*, hanged  
in that hot May of 45  
in a marketplace in Frankonia.[48]

These verses, no doubt, are unequivocal and instantaneously comprehensible except, perhaps, for that one italicized vocable. But “*Werwolf*” was the Nazi slogan for German youngsters who, as true believers and fanatic partisans behind the front lines, attempted to fight the advancing allied forces in 1944/45. Enzensberger, then a fifteen-year-old, remembers it all too well, as do I, then nearly fourteen years of age...

The second strophe, which I omit, proceeds to expand and, so

to speak, universalize the theme of children as soldiers, bringing forth, and stressing, its atrocious topicality. "Interference," on the other hand, the poem on the facing page, from the beginning lays bare the militarism rampant today, the wholesale slaughter or systematic genocide, along with their (implied) dirty politics. It is brief and allusive enough to be quoted in full:

Calling it hope would be too much,  
but when, above the ravaged villages,  
there does appear a double rainbow,  
they lower, for a couple of minutes,  
their daggers  
and keep looking on as it slowly,  
before their bloodshot eyes,  
vanishes. [49]

What Enzensberger here depicts by way of one uninterrupted sentence must, without question, be understood as a sub-Saharan scene that focuses on a group of African soldiers, rebels, terrorists or plain marauders and their massacres, which involve, every so often, armed children as well. Admittedly, the atmospheric phenomenon they watch and ponder, the rainbow, is a traditional sign and symbol of peace or, at all events, hope; however, itself and what it effects last but a few minutes.

In excess of such and similar observations, be they meteorological or military and political, chemical, mathematical, astrophysical, ecological, philosophical, or even theological, and whether bizarre and outlandish or familiar and everyday, there occur many more telling cases of a comparable 'lyrification of science etc.,' both in *Die Geschichte der Wolken* and in previous collections of Enzensberger's poetry. Economics, for example, occupies an important position in his lyrical considerations and transformations. Interestingly and significantly, the poem "Creditur" which I want to adduce, for all its length and learnedness, takes its cue from, and is combined with, the development of mathematics. The *creditur* of the heading (Lat. for *it is [being] believed*) has to be comprehended in its literal sense, but it

also invokes, needless to say, the technical terms *credit* and *debit* used in banking and bookkeeping:

Even sheer nothingness  
is a hard nut.  
Bellyache  
for metaphysicians.  
To invent the naught  
wasn't all beer and skittles.

When, to top it off,  
some Indian then  
got the idea into his head  
that something might be less than nothing,  
the Greeks balked at it.

The theologian, too,  
didn't feel happy about it.  
Eyewash, they said,  
a temptation of the Devil.

These are supposed to be natural numbers,  
the doubters exclaimed,  
minus one, minus a billion?  
Merely those rolling in money,  
and they were very few indeed,  
didn't get frightened.

Debts, write-offs, bookkeeping  
by double entry, deductions  
of unaccrued interest all over the world.  
Arithmetic —a horn of plenty.

All of us enjoy credit,  
thus spoke the bankers.  
A matter of good faith.

Ever since, it's growing and growing,  
that which is less than nothing. [108f.]

Further economical poems by Enzensberger, to enumerate just the most conspicuous from the mid-1990s onward, i.e., from the volumes *Kiosk: Neue Gedichte* ("Newsstand: New Poems," 1995), *Leichter als Luft: Moralische Gedichte* ("Lighter than Air: Moral Poems," 1999) and, of course, *Die Geschichte der Wolken*, are, to wit: "Die Reichen" ("The Rich"), "Der blecherne Teller" ("The Tin Plate," conversely yet concomitantly dealing with the poor) and "Wirtschaftsleben" ("Economic Life");<sup>10</sup> "Weltmarkt" ("World Market") and "Zahlungsmittel" ("Means of Payment");<sup>11</sup> or the sarcastic "Arbeitsteilung" ("Division of Labor") [12]. However, such Enzensbergerian verse can easily be spotted far earlier, too: as, for instance, the equally sarcastic "Einführung in die Handelskorrespondenz" ("An Introduction to Commercial Correspondence") dating from the late 1960s.<sup>12</sup>

The practices and precincts of medicine—emerging already at the end of "Blei," as will be recalled—provide another preferred field or subject of the untiring poet-scientist. In point of fact, some poems of like ilk reveal themselves as so specialized and replete with medical lingo as nearly to defy any attempt at translation. This is true above all of "Die Instrumente" ("The Instruments"), a verbal cascade of no fewer than eleven pertinent terms only one of which is listed in even the best of dictionaries [cf. 84]. And how about "Klinische Meditation" ("Clinical Meditation") from *Kiosk*? In it, the poet regales us with a litany of the names of a solid fourteen past illnesses!<sup>13</sup> Less difficult, luckily, are Enzensberger's sociological or psychological exhortations even though—or all the more since—they tend to parade in the very grab of the respective discipline. To quote merely one example:

Unfortunately, there is nothing I can do but do away with you all,

- [] because you refuse to speak Basque
- [] because the bank has frozen my overdraft credit
- [] on account of my dad
- [] because I can't stand the sight of unveiled women
- [] because the rich set my teeth on edge
- [] to please the good Lord
- [] because you don't give me the dough for my next fix
- [] because you are not catholic enough / far too catholic for me
- [] because I am offended
- [] on account of my mom
- [] because you always look at me in such a funny way
- [] because I checked the wrong box and thus flunked the exam
- [] because I hear voices
- [] and anyhow. Just so.

Thank you for your understanding.

(Please check *before the act* whatever is applicable!) [44f.]

This ironic, indeed sardonic, questionnaire entitled “Motivationsforschung” (“Motivation Research”) is self-explanatory beyond measure; instead of requiring any comments, it invites, indeed almost forces, its readers to check themselves “whatever is applicable.”

And still, with all that, Enzensberger's repertoire of scientific lyricism has not yet been exhausted in the least; additional and equally impressive or peculiar items—now more amazing, now more amusing, but always astonishing—are virtually teeming both in his *Geschichte der Wolken* and in his poetic output over the decades at large. As regards the former, it alone demonstrates, quite apart from what has already been documented, so diverse or motley an array of knowledge and erudition that the literary critic or historian is nearly at a loss when trying to group and arrange those texts, not to mention

discussing them, however fleetingly. To start off with the top-notch disciplines, so to speak, that is, with the most arcane and venerable ones for centuries, nay millennia: Enzensberger here tackles, in over a foursome of poems, theology and philosophy, submitting, say, a “Kleine Theodizee” (“A Little Theodicy”) [61] as well as “Endgültiges zur Frage der Gewißheit” (“A Definitive Judgment Concerning the Question of Certitude” [105]) and venturing upon lyrical disquisitions on noted philosophers from either Germany or Great Britain, say, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) with his well-known magnum opus of 1818 and the Irish bishop George Berkeley, who lived from 1685 to 1753 and published his *Principles of Human Knowledge* in 1710 (cf. “Wille und Vorstellung” [“Will and Representation,” 89] and “Bischof Berkeley ins Stammbuch” [“For Bishop ‘Berkeley’s Album,’” 116f.]). In fact, even the Bible itself, no matter how obliquely, is taken to task, notably in “Zur Frage, was seliger ist” (“Concerning the Question of What Is More Blessed” [63]).<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, psychoanalysis and its founder (cf. “Berggasse 19” [87f., the address of Sigmund Freud’s domicile in Vienna]) appear side by side, as it were, with international politics and tourism (cf. “Friedensgespräche” [“Peace Talks,” 43] or “Kleiner Abgesang auf die Mobilität” [“A Brief Finale on Mobility,” 72, but compare also 68]); furthermore, these rub shoulders with physics and chemistry (cf. “Temperaturen,” [“Temperatures,” 20], “Atomgewicht 12, 011” [“Atomic Weight 12.011,” 129, which is, naturally, that of carbon] and the aforesaid “Lead”); they for their part are joined by technology old and new (cf. “Die Nachahmung” [“The Imitation,” 36f., on the construction of a magnificent if ‘antediluvian’ band saw] or “Chemie der Transparenz” [“The Chemistry of Transparency,” 124f., on the fabrication of glass]); or, finally, the whole host of them and others alternate with zoology, whether in concrete terms (cf. “Schwäne” [“Swan,” 107]) or figuratively (cf. “Haustier” [“The Pet,” 79, which begins, *My sadness is my golden hamster...*]), indeed with the basics of nutrition — bluntly put, with food — at any rate, in one instance (cf. “Ein erdfarbenes Liedchen” [“An Earth-Tone Ditty,” 85, that turns out to be an ode to the potato, of all things]). That neither problems of language and linguistics — an obsession of Enzensberger’s of long



standing<sup>15</sup>— nor questions of art, music, poetry, literature in general and, of course, aesthetics are missing in *Die Geschichte der Wolken* goes without saying: consider, for example, “Die Wörter, die Wörter” (“The Words, the Words” [94f.]) or “Namenkunde” (“Onomastics” [112]), “Tripps Wunderkammer” (“Tripp’s Chamber of Wonders” or “Tripp’s Curio Gallery” [92, on the relationship of artworks and reality]), “Parlamentarisch” (“In the Parliamentary Mode” [96f., a kind of political poetics or poetical politicizing, sketching the genesis of verse]), “Der Autobiograph” (“The Autobiographer” [98]) and, last but surely not least, “Kleine Nachtmusik auf der Hoteltoilette” (“A Little Serenade at the Hotel Toilet” [99, alluding to Mozart’s popular *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, KV 525, but dealing, laconically and provocatively, with the contradiction yet interplay of *repugnancy* and *its twin brother, beauty*, as the opening line inform us]). Moreover, “Tiefe Töne in Liepāja” (“Deep Tones in Liepāja” [38f.]) actually combines music and ancient technology in that it depicts the building of *the largest mechanical organ of the world* in the Baltic, now Latvian, town of Liebau in erstwhile Kurland (thus the former German names) *between two Turkish wars* several centuries ago.

“Schöne Tage in Xinjiang” (“Nice Days in Xinjiang [69, referring to China’s remote Xinjiang Uygur province]) provides another fine example of suchlike combinations which are, by the way, quite characteristic of the scientific lyricist Enzensberger. For that which he skillfully brought out in this poem is a conjunction of at least three areas: namely, geography and ethnology as well as economics and, by implication, politics. But the best, lyrically most consummate and convincing textual and topical specimen of the same kind of verse seems to be that highly suggestive poem which is so lapidarily titled “Sterne” (“Stars”). Dedicated, with reason, to the Polish writer Adam Zagajewski (born 1945) since it covertly deals, among other things, with Poland’s history under German domination, it reads as follows:

Every year, astronomically on time, they appear again.  
What crawls here is, I believe, called moneywort,  
and that tiny stuff over there is stonecrop.  
So much that is yellow and vanishes soon.

Of those which are at a very great distance from us,  
in the cold, it's said that they burn away  
like the sparklers at a birthday party.  
During a lull in the wind, some are hanging loose  
on their flags. One can be found in the Bible.

When I was still young, there were others yet,  
crumpled and crooked, and somebody must have  
sewn them on well-worn gray overcoats.  
It hadn't been my aunt Theresia,  
other aunts had been sitting there, thread in mouth,  
longsightedly seeking the eye of the needle.  
So many stars. Don't talk about them.  
Only that they were yellow, just yellow.  
And then they had disappeared. [51]

No fewer than half a dozen scientific or similar disciplines of knowledge or fields of experience are subtly and most successfully fitted together in this memorable poem: astronomy and astrophysics, botany, politics (the *flags*, which are, needless to underscore, reminiscent of the Stars and Stripes and the like) and even religion, but, above all, more or less recent —i.e., World War II— history with its atrocities, including the holocaust. Except for the latter, they are, as evoked in the first strophe, self-evident; in respect to the second stanza, however, the reader must remember —and fully realize what it announced and entailed— that (since 19 September 1941) Jews in Nazi Germany were forced to wear the so-called “Judenstern” (*Jews' star*, a yellow Magen David with the inscription “Jude” [*Jew*]), and that it had to be sewn on a garment, preferably a coat because it was to be visible.

Returning to Enzensberger's sundry volumes which precede his *Geschichte der Wolken* of 2003, from *Verteidigung der Wölfe* of 1957 via *Landessprache* (“Language of the Country”) of 1960 or *Die Furie des Verschwindens* (“The Fury of Disappearance”) of 1980 right down to *Leichter als Luft* of 1999, I must needs try to be very brief, and proceed summarily, allowing of merely a minimum of quotations or citations, regardless of how tempting the Enzensbergerian

texts might be. Suffice it, then, to say beforehand, yet all the more emphatically, that each and every scientific (etc.) aspect hitherto mentioned, touched upon, and/or exemplified could be supplemented, without any difficulties whatsoever, by way of numerous and multifarious comparable ones from those previous collections. Whether chemical or theological, zoological or botanical, economical or astrophysical, or pertaining to art or music or letters, and so on and so forth —Enzensberger’s exuberant lyrical output of well over four decades simply abounds with them. To add but a sampling of topics which have as yet received no or only scant attention: “John von Neumann (1903-1957)” or “Zur Erinnerung an Sir Hiram Maxim (1840-1916)” (“In Memory of Sir Hiram Maxim [1840-1916]”) both treat and evaluate not just the weighty insights and results— within the domains of mathematics and physics, on the one hand, or of technology and weaponry, on the other —contributed to ever so dubious progress by these two men; what they portray and discuss is likewise, as indicated by the years the author appended, a wealth of details from the life of the respective scholar or inventor, along with glimpses at his personality and, in particular, its eccentric whims.<sup>16</sup> (Such a dual approach prevails by far, indeed all but exclusively, in *Mausoleum*, as we shall see.) The same applies, within the realm of fine arts, to the Italian painter “Paolo di Dono, genannt Uccello” (“Paolo di Dono, known as Uccello,” thus the poem’s title) even though his biographical dates, 1397-1475, are not explicitly specified. Here, as in the cases of Maxim and von Neumann, Enzensberger lyrically analyzes the stature and accomplishment of a famed person —Uccello’s *perspective*, to be precise— in an overall and overarching manner, whereas he otherwise selects an individual work when embarking on art history: as, for instance, in “Gillis van Coninxloo, Landschaft. Holz, 65 x 119 cm” (“Gillis van Coninxloo, Landscape. Wood, 65 by 119 cm”) from *Zukunftsmusik* (“Music of the Future”) of 1991.<sup>17</sup> Or compare “Besuch bei Ingres” (“Visiting [the 19<sup>th</sup> century French painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique] Ingres”) from *Die Furie des Verschwindens* or, better still, the much earlier “Carceri d’invenzione” (on the strange and eerie dungeon pictures of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Italian artist Giovanni

Battista Piranesi) from *Blindenschrift* (“Braille”) of 1964; in point of fact, Enzensberger’s sole epic, too, *Der Untergang der Titanic: Eine Komödie* (“The Sinking of the Titanic: A Comedy[!]”) dating from 1978, indulges in a massive series of genuinely iconic poems—for what else but specimens of that age-old tradition should they be—on either real or imaginary artworks.<sup>18</sup>

Other areas which have so far not been taken into account, nor even hinted at, are those of law or of revolutionary thought and activities or—a letdown perhaps—of everyday traffic. Concerning the latter, for instance, *Kiosk* and, especially, *Die Geschichte der Wolken* offer telling and typical illustrations: to wit, “Ausfallstraße” (“Arterial Road”) and “U-Bahn Wittenbergplatz” (“Subway [Station] Wittenberg Square”), either of which contents itself with a rather pensive mood induced by what is being observed or experienced, and, in stark contrast to them, “Zuschauer” (“Onlookers”), because these spectators keep staring at the *smoldering wreck* and the *dying man* after a car crash.<sup>19</sup> As regards revolution, whether in Germany or abroad, and whether carried out or not, itself and that which it presupposes play (or, more likely, played) an intensive and momentous role in Enzensberger’s own life and development, both in his thinking and writing as well as in his editorial work or certain more direct and drastic involvements he came forward with during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, a couple of illustrative items will again suffice. As early as 1964, in *Blindenschrift*, the poet published his “Karl Heinrich Marx,” an evocative lyrical portrait of dialectic dimensions; as late as 1991, in *Zukunftsmusik*, his “Alte Revolution” (“Old Revolution”) laid bare, without resignation in principle, the contradictions and painful shortcomings of Fidel Castro and Cuban socialism. In between, Enzensberger couldn’t help voicing, however ironically, some *de rigueur* self-criticism (e.g., in “Zwei Fehler” [“Two Mistakes”]) until, in the mid-1990s, he ultimately arrived at a melancholy and nostalgic retrospect on the so-called student revolt, that honorable would-be uprising in France, the United States, and Germany (cf. “Frühschriften” [“Early Writings”: namely, those of Marx]).<sup>21</sup> And what, on the other hand, of the counterpart of any

révolutionary ideas and actions, the abstract and yet so concrete entity that makes a rebel, literally, see red? That this persistent stumbling block, codified law and all it conceals, must constantly have provoked and angered a poet like Enzensberger might have been expected from the outset. But his fierce parodic attacks were by no means restrictive; they even included said self-criticism, albeit now, for a change, in collective and generally literary and artistic terms. Hence, from *Leichter als Luft* once more, we learn under the heading “Ausführungsbestimmungen zu Artikel 5, Absatz 3 GG” (“Regulations of Implementation Concerning Article 5, Section 3 of the Basic Law”):

- § 1. Art is free.
- § 2. The artist is prohibited  
from being harmless, discreet,  
a good husband  
with a regular income.
- § 3. The artist is obligated  
to be intolerable.  
Concerning harmless, discreet,  
good husbands  
with a regular income,  
he is in duty bound  
lifelong, through his acts  
as an asocial bumpkin,  
a whiny martyr,  
a legendary stinker,  
to annoy, to bore  
and to entertain them.

Admittedly, this witty little invective which ridicules the “Grundgesetz” (“GG” = *Basic Law* [of the Federal Republic]) is itself comparatively harmless, in spite of its pinch of self-critique. All the more sarcastic and bitterly scathing, therefore, are aggressive —and blatantly topical— parodies and travesties such as “Vorschlag zur Strafrechtsreform”

(“A Proposal for Reforming the Criminal Law”) or “Privilegierte Tatbestände” (“Privileged Elements of an Offense” [“Privileged Instructions” according to Hamburger]), the latter text, for instance, beginning in no uncertain terms, “Es ist verboten, Personen in Brand zu stecken” (*It is forbidden to set fire to persons*).<sup>22</sup>

All the same, the main thrust of Enzensberger’s innovative poetizing has always, or more and more, been aimed at the lyrification of science, if in a truly all-embracing sense. Yet, for lack of space, I can no longer adduce any illuminative quotations; instead, I shall proffer, in chronological order, a selective sequence of titles. Already as such they are, I trust, revealing enough. To wit:<sup>23</sup>

“Rätsel” (“Riddle”, or “Enigma” [i.e., the human heart]), “Schwierige Arbeit” (“Difficult Work” [dedicated to the philosopher and sociologist Theodor W. Adorno]), “Flechtenkunde” (“Lichen Lore”), “Mehrere Elstern” (“Several Magpies”), “Friedenskongreß” (“Peace Conference”), “Das Übliche” (“The Usual Thing” [on Cuban history past and present]), “Hommage à Gödel”, “Bericht aus Bonn” (“Report from Bonn”), “Stadtrundfahrt” (“City Sightseeing Tour” [of Hungary’s capital Budapest]), “Kurze Geschichte der Bourgeoisie” (“A Short History of the Bourgeoisie”), “Die Lehre von den Kategorien” (“The Doctrine of Categories”), “Das Geld” (“The Money”); “Erkenntnistheoretisches Modell” (“Model toward a Theory of Cognition”), “Erkenntnisdienstliche Behandlung” (“Identity Check”), “Fachschaft Philosophie” (“Dept. of Philosophy”; “Die Mathematiker” (“The Mathematicians”), “Vierte Symphonie, Coliseu dos Recreios, Lissabon” (Fourth Symphony, Coliseu dos Recreios, Lisbon”), “Aufbruchsstimmung” (Atmosphere of Departure” [a Berlin poem picturing the ‘Wende’ situation of 1989/90]),<sup>24</sup> “Leopoldstraße” (Leopold Street” [in Munich]), “In höheren Lagen gewittrige Störungen” (“At Higher Altitudes Thundery Disturbances”), “Schlaftablette” (Sleeping Pill”), “Ein Hase im Rechenzentrum” (“A Hare in the Data Processing Center”),

“Gespräch über Darwin, die Katze und den Weberknecht” (A Conversation about Darwin, the Cat and the Daddy Longlegs”), “Limbisches System” (“Limbic System”), “Grenzwerte” (“Lim[it]s”), “Seltsamer Attraktor” (“Strange Attractor”), “Äolische Formen” (“Eolian Forms” [on geological formations caused by the wind]); “Der Krieg, wie” (“War, Like”), “Altes Europa” (“[Good] Old Europe”), “Herbst 1944” (“Fall 1944” [On the air raids of World War II]),<sup>25</sup> “Lob der Gewalt” (“In Praise of Violence” [i.e., that of a thunderstorm]), “Neuronales Netz” (“Neuronal Net”), “Norwegisches Holz” (“Norwegian Timber”), “Näheres über einen Baum” (“More about a Tree”), “Zur Frage der Reinkarnation” (“On the Problem of Reincarnation” [i.e., the fly’s sempiternal existence]), “Der Renaissanceforscher” (“The Renaissance Scholar”), “Für Karajan und andere” (“For [the Conductor Herbert von] Karajan and Others”),<sup>26</sup> “Osiris (Outer Space Intelligence Research Investigation System) [sic],” “Nimbus” (“Nimbus” [both in its mythological or theological sense as well as in that of meteorology]); “Entdecker” (“Discoverers”), “Astrale Wissenschaft” (“Astral Science”), “Das Einfache, das schwer zu erfinden ist” (“That Which Is Simple But Hard to Invent”), “Länderlexikon” (“A Glossary of Countries”), “Hong Kong 1997,” “Prästabilierte Disharmonie” (“Prestabilized Disharmony” [a turnabout of the message of the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>-century German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz]), “Equisetum” (“Equisetum” [i.e., the horsetail plant]), “Hotel Caesar Palace” (“Caesars Palace Hotel” [in Las Vegas]), “Modelle” (“Models” [of painters]), “Grenzen der Vorstellungskraft” (“Limits of Imagination” [starting off with “the number 9 to the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> power”]), “Abschied von den Astronauten” (“A Farewell to Astronauts”), “Wissenschaftliche Theologie” (“Scientific Theology”).

A flabbergastingly long and variegated list, no doubt. And yet, what it consists of is, as stated before, a mere selection. For it does not even

take notice of the vast domain of linguistics (plus onomastics) and literature, a realm which might safely claim to be the most conspicuous one of my various ‘etc.s’ Enzensberger’s readership is bound to encounter. If we consider what has already been mentioned—and that comprises far more than the “Ausführungsbestimmungen” quoted above<sup>27</sup>—the pertinent items reach a total number of over two dozens. Whether marked by deadly seriousness or imbued with sovereign irony, they can be spotted both as early as the late fifties and as late as the early nineties... and beyond. Poets and poetry in particular are chosen by Enzensberger (small wonder, I daresay) and treated either with awe and admiration or with condescension and almost scorn. Just ponder “Tod eines Dichters” (“The Death of a Poet”) or “Zum Andenken an William Carlos Williams” (“In Memory of William Carlos Williams”) on the one hand and “Goldener Schnittmusterbogen zur poetischen Wiederaufrüstung” (“A Golden Paper Pattern Chart for Poetic Rearmament”) or “Poetry Festival” on the other. (The latter heading appears in English already in the original; also, the poem is inscribed to the Flemish modernist Paul van Ostaïen [1896-1928].) Additional—and, as often as not, quite irreverent—such texts include “Weitere Gründe dafür, daß die Dichter lügen” (“Further Reasons Why Poets Do Not Tell the Truth” [in the author’s own rendition]) from *Der Untergang der Titanic* as well as “Poetik der Lüge” (“Poetics of Lying”) and “Optionen für einen Dichter” (“Options for a Poet”) from *Leichter als Luft*, not forgetting “Ein letzter Beitrag zu der Frage ob Literatur?” (“A Last Contribution to the Question Whether [There Should Be] Literature?”) dating from around 1970 or shortly thereafter and contemporaneous, more or less, with “Poetry Festival” and the lines and strophes dedicated to Williams’s memory, whereas, for example, “Tod eines Dichters” (written for a friend of Enzensberger’s who committed suicide) proceeds from *Verteidigung der Wölfe*, that is, the year 1957. Indeed, the 1991 volume *Zukunftsmusik* displays a whole series of relevant verse: among others, “Der Lügner” (“The Liar”) and “Nämlich” (“Namely”), which takes its title at its word, so to speak, thus resulting in a typically onomastic meditation or diatribe again.<sup>28</sup>



But to return to Enzensberger's lyrification of science proper, to reiterate its overwhelming importance, and to try to stay within its confines. For there are, it seems to me, at least a couple of questions, or problems, that still remain; moreover, each of them would indubitably require a thorough investigation of its own. First of all, we must ask ourselves if there have occurred any significant changes in Enzensberger's attitude toward science and his lyrification thereof; second, we now must finally come back, although but briefly and cursorily, to the "ballads" of his *Mausoleum*, as I promised almost at the outset. Here, then, are my preliminary findings and my tentative results in either respect.

As for the poet's reception and lyrical treatment of science, a half abrupt, half gradual change can indeed be discerned, and a fairly decisive and seemingly lasting one at that. It is twofold: on the one hand, a development or shift has doubtless taken place from a more subjective mood in the beginning to a more objective stand towards the end. *Verteidigung der Wölfe*, for instance, still presents a considerable number of poems which relate individual experiences—especially, moments or hours of bliss and happiness or, at all events, of contentment—experiences and feelings, moreover, that are located geographically and/or historically in a very personal, near biographical sense: they give, in a word, the impression of belated offshoots of traditional German "Erlebnisdichtung" or "-lyrik,"<sup>29</sup> as witness "Für Lot, einen makedonischen Hirten" ("For Lot, a Macedonian Shepherd"), "Larisa" ("Larisa" [a city in Northern Greece]), "Bildungsreise" ("Grand Tour") or "Ravenna" ("Ravenna" [or, rather, the Byzantine churches in this ancient Italian town]) and similar texts.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, science at this point is introduced along the selfsame lines, as, most imposingly, in "Gespräch der Substanzen" ("Conversation of the Substances") from Enzensberger's subsequent collection, *Landessprache* of 1960. This poem, an exemplary case in point, runs as follows:

Aber das Bor, aber in ihren Brunnen  
die aromatischen Öle: wer fragt Zink und Zyan,  
wer kümmert sich um die Kolloide, den Haß

zwischen Kalk und Arsen, die Liebe der Radikale  
zum Wasser, der Transurane schweigende Raserei?  
Niemand liest die Manifeste der Seltenen Erden,  
das Geheimnis der Salze, in Drusen versiegelt,  
bleibt ungelöst, unbesungen der alte Zwist  
zwischen links- und rechtsdrehenden Aldehyden,  
unberufen der Klatsch der Hormone. Hochmut  
treibt die Kristalle, unter den Silikaten  
geht die Rede von Kies. Die Spate, die Blenden  
flüstern, die Kleesäuren und Asbeste. Der Äther  
in seinen Ampullen hetzt gegen den Schwefel, das Jod  
und das Glycerin. Feindlich warten in blauen Flaschen  
Bleizucker, Phosphor und Sublimat. Ihr Mörder!  
Ihr Boten! Ihr wehrlosen Zeugen der Welt!

Warum kann ich nicht Konten und Feuer löschen,  
abbestellen die Gäste, die Milch und die Zeitung,  
eingehn ins zarte Gespräch der Harze,  
der Laugen, der Minerale, ins endlose Brüten  
und Jammern der Stoffe dringen, verharren  
im tonlosen Monolog der Substanzen?<sup>31</sup>

That these two strophes are very difficult to capture in translation  
ought to be obvious; nonetheless, I have tried to come at least close:

But boron, but down in their wells  
the aromatic oils: who interrogates zinc and cyanogen,  
who takes care of the colloids, the hatred between  
lime and arsenic, the love of the radical groups  
for water, the transuranic elements' silent rage?  
No one reads the manifestoes of the rare earths;  
the secret of the salts, sealed up in druses,  
remains unsolved, the ancient feud between  
levo- and dextrorotary aldehydes, unsung,  
the hormones' gossip, untold. Haughtiness  
drives the crystals, among the silicates

there's talk about shingle. The spars, the glances  
whisper, the oxalic acids and the asbestos. Ether  
in its ampules agitates against sulphur, iodine  
and glycerine. Hostile, in their blue bottles, phosphorus,  
sugar of lead and sublimate are waiting. You murderers!  
You messengers! You helpless witnesses of the world!

Why can't I close the accounts and extinguish the fires,  
cancel the guests, the milk and the newspaper, join  
the lyes', the resins', the minerals' gentle  
conversation, penetrate into the endless  
brooding and moaning of the materials, stay  
with the soundless soliloquies of the substances?<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, elaborate chemistry and an intense personal emotion, indeed an anxious yearning, are insolubly welded together in this powerful verse —and, paradoxically, not despite but precisely because of its strophic division.

On the other hand, however, an anxiety of a very different kind reigns supreme, or is intensely present, in some of Enzensberger's early poems. For, while a confession like "Gespräch der Substanzen" revels, scientifically, in the life of the elements and compounds, indeed expressly yearns for a flight to their sheltering and consoling womb, as it were, some equally scientific and poetic texts of the same period muse on, or express a longing for, a no less impossible flight from them and the menacing products they have yielded. It is, in short, the widespread fear of an atomic war and the threat of an ensuing global cataclysm which pervades and overshadows much of the Enzensbergerian poetry of the sixties in particular. In most cases, the very titles —several of them, significantly enough, in English— are indicative thereof. Take, for example, "Isotop" ("Isotope"), "An alle Fernsprechteilnehmer" ("To All Telephone Subscribers"), "Doomsday" and "Countdown," or "Nänie auf den Apfel" ("A Dirge on the Apple" [i.e., the globe or earth]. Still, the most accomplished and beautiful one —if that's the term— from among these eschatological poems bears the heading "Das Ende der Eulen" ("The End of Owls");

it stems from *Landessprache* once more, and it reads:

Ich spreche von euerm nicht,  
ich spreche von Ende der Eulen.  
Ich spreche von Butt und Wal  
in ihrem dunkeln Haus,  
dem siebenfältigen Meer,  
von den Gletschern,  
sie werden kalben zu früh,  
Rab und Taube, gefiederten Zeugen,  
von allem was lebt in Lüften  
und Wäldern, und den Flechten im Kies,  
vom Weglosen selbst, und vom grauen Moor  
und den leeren Gebirgen:

Auf Radarschirmen leuchtend  
zum letzten Mal, ausgewertet  
auf Meldetischen, von Antennen  
tödlich befigert Floridas Sümpfe  
und das sibirische Eis, Tier  
und Schilf und Schiefer erwürgt  
von Warnketten, umzingelt  
vom letzten Manöver, arglos  
unter schwebenden Feuerglocken,  
im Ticken des Ernstfalls.

Wir sind schon vergessen.  
Sorgt euch nicht um die Waisen,  
aus dem Sinn schlägt euch  
die mündelsichern Gefühle,  
den Ruhm, die rostfreien Psalmen.  
Ich spreche nicht mehr von euch,  
Planern der spurlosen Tat,  
und von mir nicht, und keinem.  
Ich spreche von dem was nicht spricht,  
von den sprachlosen Zeugen,

von Ottern und Robben,  
und von den alten Eulen der Erde.<sup>33</sup>

In Michael Hamburger's rendition:

I do not speak of what's yours,  
I speak of the end of the owls.  
I speak of turbot and whale  
in their glimmering house,  
in the sevenfold sea,  
of the glaciers—  
too soon they will calve—  
raven and dove, the feathered witnesses,  
of all that lives in the winds  
and woods, and the lichen on rock,  
of impassable tracts and the grey moors  
and the empty mountain ranges:

Shining on radar screens  
for the last time, recorded,  
checked out on consoles, fingered  
by aerals fatally Florida's marshes  
and the Siberian ice, animal,  
reed and slate all strangled  
by interlinked warnings, encircled  
by the last manoeuvres, guileless  
under hovering cones of fire,  
while the time-fuses tick.

As for us, we're forgotten.  
Don't give a thought to the orphans,  
expunge from your minds  
your guilt-edged security feelings  
and fame and the stainless psalms.  
I don't speak of you any more,  
planners of vanishing actions,

nor of me, nor of anyone.  
I speak of that without speech,  
of the unspeaking witnesses,  
of otters and seals,  
of the ancient owls of the earth.<sup>34</sup>

Of course, what likewise transpires from these three stanzas (compare *Florida's marshes and the Siberian ice*) is the oppressive situation and atmosphere of the silently raging Cold War. But contrariwise, later on —as, for example, in “Vom Leben nach dem Tode” (“Of Life after Death”) from *Kiosk* of 1995— the atomic catastrophe and universal apocalypse appear not quite as devastating and total anymore as once depicted in “Das Ende der Eulen” or its companion pieces, for only (!) the human race with its civilization has now exterminated itself while elsewhere “wuchert das Leben wieder” (*life is proliferating afresh*).<sup>35</sup>

That much —or little— for the exhilarating development and change in question. Concerning *Mausoleum*, to repeat, it would also, even more so, need an extensive and thoroughgoing disquisition of its own which lack of available space strictly precludes. As will be remembered, Enzensberger has labeled the thirty-seven texts this unique volume contains as “ballads” or, to be more precise, “ballads from the history of progress.” And rightly so, since that which characterizes, indeed distinguishes, them and the poetological essence of their innovative contribution reveals itself again, if in a complementary manner, as emphatically twofold: namely, with regard to both content, or subject matter, and structure, or form. Already the second *Mausoleum* piece provides a representative and illuminative though not necessarily gripping paradigm. It is entitled “J. G. G. (1395 [or ca.1390] – 1468),” a deliberately and typically cryptic heading which translates into Johann(es) Gensfleisch (zum) Gutenberg, i.e., the German inventor of printing from movable letters. This is what Enzensberger has to say:

How closely this page here resembles a thousand other pages,  
and how difficult it is to be astonished at that!

The same book, not the selfsame, *The art of artificial writing*: something metallic, a well-worn idea derived from gold, from silver, from copper, from lead. The primary reproduction must have been a coin, the first commodity, money, the onset of industry. Messages

after messages: matrices, blocks and letters. The quattrocento, something for art historians and theologians. Excommunications, stakes, Hundred Years' wars, all kinds of Gothic lore.

Yeah, that too. Above all, though: progress in mining and milling machines, in metallurgy and in weaponry. Not the Madonna in Rosenhag but the crane and the worm wheel.

In his workshop's darkness, anonymous and hidden, this loner pursues —himself pursued by interests, remainders, sudden financial gaps— his aim, which is as mighty as combinatorics:

to compose and multiply at pleasure and will out of twenty-five by two metallic characters (not including the numbers and ligatures) all that has been, is or might be the case,

*not with the help of a slate pencil, quill or pen but by way of the forms' internal coherence,* cut in steel, embossed in copper, cast in lead, tin, bismuth and antimony.

Whatever was needed: Arabic waterworks, the growing of flax and hemp, clothpresses, winepresses, rag mills, import and export trade; an arsenal of forgotten tools: the casting ladle, the bunion,

the chase, the tentacle, galley and bale;  
a host of workers, exploiters, accomplices  
straight from Cracow to Salamanca: wire-pullers,  
ragpickers, bankers; namely, it's only then that

Gensfleisch enters, the old mirror grinder from Mainz,  
hard put by creditors, half gone blind, not  
smelling of incense but of boiled linseed oil  
and soot. He has disappeared in a haze of

hot metal. This here, this black stuff  
on the white paper, has remained:  
*The art of artificial writing*,  
a leaden aftertaste from the quattrocento.<sup>36</sup>

Undoubtedly, there emerge from this remarkable literary creation certain features which either catch the eye at once or come to light after some reflection only, yet prove to be equally revealing and momentous in both cases.

First and foremost, what one notices is the —maybe not quite so surprising— fact that “J. G. G. (1395-1468)” boasts a stanzaic makeup, as indeed befits a ballad; it consists of a graphic sequence of more or less smoothly uniform quatrains, eleven altogether. But Enzensberger's strophes do not show any rhymes or a regular meter, to be sure. Conversely, however, they are by no means devoid of poetic and rhetorical devices, the most manifest instance being that poignant repetition expressing a simultaneous contrast of meaning in the fifth stanza, a forceful feat which I have rendered as *this loner pursues —himself pursued/by interests, reminders, sudden financial gaps— his aim*, and whose German model (even more strikingly, because of its flawless verbal agreement) runs in its context and with my emphases:



In der Dunkelheit seiner Werkstatt, heimlich  
und anonym, verfolgt dieser eine, verfolgt  
von Zinsen, Mahnungen, Finanzierungslücken,  
sein Ziel...

No less effective as a formal, or structural, procedure are the lines and sentences printed in italics... authentic quotations, in all likelihood, at least as far as the ‘couplet’ in the seventh stanza is concerned. This artifice comes to the fore especially clearly through the double quote of the pronouncement —a *figura etymologica*, by the way— “Die Kunst des künstlichen Schreibens” (*The art of artificial writing*) both at the outset and at the end of the text; once again, it constitutes an eloquent device that for its part results, more than anything else, in a definite aesthetic closure. The iterance of the term *quattrocento* and, in particular, of the vocable “hier” (*here*) efficiently serve —albeit in a minor key, as it were— the very same purpose by emphasizing the topic’s historical dimensions, on the one hand, and by firmly grounding it in the author’s and the recipient’s everyday present, on the other.

Furthermore, not only does the balladeer Enzensberger portray the person, depict the awkward and precarious position, and convey the gist of the seminal invention (and how it was brought about) of his 15<sup>th</sup>-century hero, but he also delves, if by virtue of curt and minimal signals and intimations, into the possible antecedents and actual parallels of the art of printing with movable letters. Gutenberg and his efforts and accomplishments appear embedded in their own world and age, as well as being rooted in the past and branching out into the future; besides, they are situated in the economic conditions —apart from the obvious technological ones— of their time and society, indeed are subjected, no matter in how incidental a fashion, to social criticism. Small wonder that the catchword *progress* (in German, even in its pluralized form “Fortschritte”) is expressly enounced, although, granted, with a gesture of reserved and, on closer scrutiny, profoundly ironical triumph. And the selfsame or similar features typify, both in terms of contents, or malleable material, and in terms of language and composition, or texture and form, the many as well as manifold pieces making up the Enzensbergerian collection.

Thus, *Mausoleum*, too, like that multifarious plethora from the lyricist's later works in especial, reveals itself as an ambitious and, no question about it, successful attempt at a continual poetic 'scientification' (though, surely, never a cheap scientism). The topics of Enzensberger's *Thirty-Seven Ballads from the History of Progress* are, numerically speaking, distributed over a full seven centuries and no fewer than a dozen countries, all of them, characteristically, located in the so-called West (yet including Poland and Russia) and, with one exception, restricted to the northern hemisphere. However, the nation most often adduced and tongue-in-cheek celebrated is not, as might naively have been surmised, England, the proverbial cradle and agent of industrialization, but neighboring France: she and Italy (!) as the runner-up, so to say, are allotted, respectively, ten or seven notable individuals with their various contributions, whereas Great Britain has to content herself with merely six entries, to continue to be exact. The author's native Germany, moreover, is represented, rather surprisingly just three times, and the United States —another surprise, no doubt— only twice, as are both Russia and Old Austria-Hungary, while Denmark, Sweden, Spain and, lo and behold, Argentina are allowed to put in at least one meager appearance. And who, one begins to wonder, are those sundry heroes and standard-bearers of problematic progress, "man's distinctive mark alone," as Robert Browning, echoing a widespread opinion and belief, once phrased it?<sup>37</sup> Alongside, naturally, such famous and well-known luminaries as Machiavelli and Darwin, the Baroque polyhistor Leibniz and the African explorer Stanley, the composer Frédéric Chopin —since the manifestations of beauty aren't absent, either— or, for that matter, the biologist Carle von Linné: alongside such towering men, it must be reiterated and stressed, there surface plenty of further names who are accorded sizable texts of their own, both real household ones like the former and odd and outlandish ones that hardly anybody, excepting the specialists, has ever heard of. As to women, on the other hand, they occur as a mere handful only (among them, granted, the nurse and philanthropist Florence Nightingale [1820-1910] but also Agatha Christie [1890-1976], knighted Dame of the British Empire after having churned out around eighty detective stories). None of these females,

as illustrious as they may be, functions as an Enzensbergerian heroine, or protagonist of an independent and separate balladic piece.<sup>38</sup>

Let me list, therefore, just a random selection of additional males, be they figures of worldwide impact, importance and overall fame or modest, run-of-the-mill, almost unknown laborers in the treacherous vineyard of progress... and, furthermore, regardless of whether they have been privileged by the scientific bard, hence rest in a personal niche of that monumental as well as monstrous tomb called *Mausoleum*, or are in fact introduced and mentioned —if at all— in passing at best. For the sake of brevity, though, it might be advisable, in so doing, to proceed chronologically. Namely, Enzensberger starts out, esoterically enough, with the Italian Giovanni de'Dondi (“G. de’D. [1318-1389]” from idyllic Padua in the Old World, who spent his entire life on the construction of a miraculous clock. Then, after Gutenberg and Machiavelli, there follows in the New World the Spaniard Bernardino de Sahagún (“B. de S. [1499-1590]”) bent on founding “eine Wissenschaft, rigoros und neu” (*a science, rigorous and novel*) and, doubtless, proving himself a genuine and daring anthropologist *avant la lettre*.<sup>39</sup> (Still, no average reader, I trust, has even remotely been familiar with either “de’D.” or “B. de S.” and their import to progress and its history before Enzensberger came to dig them up.) Next we hit, for example, upon the utopian philosopher Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) from Italy once more, as well as on the philosopher and mathematician Antoine Caritat Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794) from France; both are somewhat better known, it is true, as are, of course, the English economist and demographer Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) or the German natural scientist and hectic traveler Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859). From the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, at long last, the French politician and philosophical writer Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) might be singled out, and be coupled with the Hungarian physician Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis (1818-1865), the American engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915), an “Arbeitsökonom” (*economizer of labor*), as the balladeer aptly dubs him,<sup>40</sup> or, why not, with the French film pioneer and director Georges Méliès (1861-1938). But who are the ones to conclude this breathtaking historical roundabout which is a

weird *danse macabre* of sorts as well? They are, presenting themselves nearly arm in arm, the indefatigable Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich Molotov (1890-1986) and the short-lived revolutionary idol of the sixties, the Argentinean Ernesto (Ché) Guevara de la Serna (1928-1967). All of them are deemed worthy of a full-fledged individual ballad.

Scores of names, as I said, could be added at random. To register merely some of the celebrities who are denied an entry of their own, and reduced to marginal positions: they include —I list them alphabetically for a change— Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, Hector Berlioz, Georg Büchner, Lord Byron and Lord Tennyson, Charlie Chaplin, Christopher Columbus, René Descartes, Denis Diderot, Thomas Alva Edison, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Gustave Flaubert, Galileo Galilei, Carlo Goldoni, Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, Heinrich Heine, Thomas Hobbes, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Stéphane Mallarmé, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Napoleon, Friedrich Nietzsche, Petrarch, Maurice Ravel, James Mayer Rothschild, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Baruch de Spinoza, the dictators Stalin and Franco, August Strindberg, Vergil, Jules Verne, and Richard Wagner. That poets —surprisingly, perhaps, or not so surprisingly, after all— appear with remarkable frequency ought to be evident at first sight; however, there are others yet whose presence is certainly more amazing. No wonder, needless to say, if the aforementioned graphic artist Piranesi from Rome, the creator of the *Carceri d'invenzione*, is granted a return, for Enzensberger loves to equate the Italian's huge and uncanny architectonic structures, here in a ballad as in a lyric from the mid-sixties, to the human brain and its parts... and not without reason. By contrast, the sudden emergence of a mechanical duck ("Ein Chef-d'oeuvre") or the live performance of a magician, a conjurer, an illusionist, cannot fail to cause at least an initial astonishment, even frowning. (Both phenomena, incidentally, hail from France: the duckling was invented by Jacques de Vaucanson [1709-1782], and the legendary performer, chiefly as an escape artist, was Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin [1805-1871] in person.) Yet Enzensberger is fully aware of what he is after, and he expresses it beautifully: "Ununterscheidbar der Fortschritt des Schwindels vom Schwindel

des Fortschritts.” Unfortunately, the pithy ambiguity of this truly dialectical statement defies any adequate translation into English: to wit, *the progress of hoax and humbug proves indistinguishable from the hoax and humbug of progress* —because the German word “Schwindel, most significantly indeed within the context of *Mausoleum*, imparts a double meaning, *vertigo and dizziness* no less than *hoax and humbug*.<sup>41</sup>

What must also have become manifest and abundantly clear by now is, generally speaking, the far-reaching identity or, at any rate, vast and repeated overlapping of the disciplines of ‘science etc.’ that the poet Enzensberger has covered in his lyrical ‘lyrification’ —pardon the pun— as well as in his allegedly (for the time being) balladic one. To enumerate them again would be quite cumbersome and more than superfluous; at the most, a variety of hitherto untouched fields of study or interest might be explicitly named so as to round off our sprawling inventory. Such additional areas —among others, and at the risk of redundancy— encompass journalism and fashion, anatomy and physiology, administration and industrialism, political science and banking, statistics and criminalistics, even city planning and urbanism at large (as carried through by the Frenchman Georges-Eugène Haussmann [1809-1891] who modernized Paris and, therefore, duly received his own if comparatively brief balladic discussion). But, mind you, that which I am concerned with is not an in-depth analysis or interpretation of the contents, from or, above all, the message of Enzensberger’s complex and multilayered yet carefully and most subtly composed collection;<sup>42</sup> that would indeed go beyond the scope of this essay of mine... even though it is turning out, I am afraid, to be a veritable jumbo essay. Rather, what has to be taken up in conclusion and, for better or worse, be settled to a certain degree is the problem —a thorny one for most critics, it seems— of literary genre, or type, or category. Are, in short, those *Siebenunddreißig Balladen* Enzensberger has penned, and assembled in his awesome *Mausoleum*, really ballads in any traditional and acceptable sense?

When commenting on the Gutenberg text, I already drew attention to a couple of salient features: namely, on the one hand, to the fact that it openly and irrefutably employs rhetorical figures and

poetic devices and, on the other, more blatantly yet, that it consists, without fail, of a coherent sequence of regular strophes. The former has in the meantime been sufficiently substantiated, both by highlighting the poetic closure of “J. G. G (1395-1468)” and by emphasizing its and similar texts’ accomplished rhetoric manifesting itself by way of ambiguities and antitheses or even the rare *figura etymologica*. These observations could easily be supplemented by further examples, for Enzensberger’s procedures extend from the mere if suggestive playing on words that borders on what in German is labeled a “Kalauer” (*forced pun*) to elaborate and piercing polemical metonymies that surreptitiously connect the Middle Ages or the Renaissance with present-day science and research, economy and politics. (Referring to 18<sup>th</sup>-century Piranesi, for instance, the author caustically notes: “Und seine Radiernadel, sieht sie nicht aus wie eine S o n d e ? Wie s o n d e rbar!” [*And his etching needle, doesn’t it look like a probe or sound? How singular!*]) Or the astronomer Brahe from the 16<sup>th</sup> century is dubbed an “Egghead” [in English], whereas, we are assured, the horologist De’Doni from the 14<sup>th</sup> century *had no contract with the Pentagon*, nor did his contemporary and fellow countryman, the poet Petrarch, receive any monthly *checks* from *Guggenheim*.<sup>43</sup> *Mausoleum*, to all intents and purposes, is virtually teeming with such devices and procedures, both multifold and multi-form;<sup>44</sup> as for closure in particular, I shall return to it immediately.

With regard to the specific forms and structures of the Enzensbergerian volume, the results one can glean from it are even more convincing; in fact, they are downright overwhelming. For no fewer than nineteen of its thirty-seven texts betray a strictly stanzaic (i.e., balladic) composition comprising up to twenty-five strophes of up to eleven lines each. Another seven texts show at least a set of irregular strophes while two must be subsumed under the rubric of free verse, one belonging to the terse and concise variety thereof, one to its loose and sweeping variant described as “Parlando” by the longtime doyen of postwar German poetry, the late Karl Krolow.<sup>45</sup> Conversely, however, the pieces written in prose number merely nine meager items! Hence, texts which are plainly prosaic occupy one fourth, texts which are patently strophic, if without rhyme, well over two thirds of

the entire collection. But that is by far not all. Several of Enzensberger's *Balladen* conclude with a point, or isolated punch line or punch couplet, a closure that he himself has expressly and properly defined: namely, as "Envoi" (using, instead of the German "Geleit," the French word which is identical with the English term, and, moreover, applying it to a prose piece). Clearly, a suchlike 'laying bare of the device' (*obnazhenie priëma* according to the Russian Formalists)<sup>46</sup> is more than justifiable, for not only have individual sequences of stanzas as the ones on von Linné or his Italian colleague Lazzaro Spallanzani (1729-1799) been endowed with it, but even the collection as a whole culminates with it. Much quoted, ruminated and discussed, this final envoi runs:

Der Text bricht ab, und ruhig rotten die Antworten fort.  
(*The text breaks off, and, quietly, the answers continue to rot.*)

But what do we find a bit earlier in the volume, yet also toward its end? We find two pieces which reveal themselves as especially artful structurally, and precisely in a balladic sense. Namely, the text devoted to the French filmmaker Méliès, seven strophes consisting of eight fairly long lines each, adds, in every instance, a ninth verse which is considerably shorter and functions like a mini-envoi and, in most cases, as a maxim as well (e.g., "Er ist der Erste, immer der Erste" [*He is the first, always the first*]); furthermore, and to top it off, the text on the Russian anarchist and revolutionary Bakunin is composed of a series of double strophes—eight altogether, and consisting of six and three lines, respectively—which change and alternate on a regular basis and, besides, are apportioned to two voices, so to speak, the first being a narrative one interspersed and spiced up with quotations, the second, that of the author himself, who is deeply engaged and reacts to, or comments on, what is reported: indeed he frankly addresses, interrogates, praises and chides the protagonist pictured. Thus, might not the latter device be read and viewed as a balladic refrain of sorts?<sup>47</sup>

Still, such ample evidence notwithstanding, it has been alleged that the overt and outspoken though quite unique form and tone of Enzensberger's *Mausoleum* are, as tokens of balladry, decreasing as

its history progresses, rather than steadily increasing and markedly intensifying. "In the early ballads," we are told,

a sense of symmetry, proportion, and conventional poetic language exists, while the logic motivating the collection as a whole has not yet become completely clear. Later, the detail crowding the poems turns disproportionately dense, giving in to the influence of prose.<sup>48</sup>

Which is, no question about it, largely untenable from our standpoint. At the very least, there prevails in *Mausoleum*, if no marked and steady growth of poetic elements, yet a safe and sound balance between these and the prosaic ones... even though the former, in my opinion, tend to outweigh the latter. The bare and unalloyed prose pieces, at any rate, have been distributed evenly over the entire collection. And then, there obtain, it goes without saying, various aspects of a general purport and relevance that here must also be taken into consideration. For what are, after all, the essential components of a true ballad deserving of its name? A ballad, that is, within the context of German poetics or aesthetics? Apart from stressing its dual indebtedness to English literature, especially of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and to Romance letters, which accounts, by the way, for the closing device of the envoi, the handbooks content themselves, as a rule, with drawing upon some five to six criteria. Or as *A Glossary of German Literary Terms* from New Zealand, of all places, has put it:

According to Goethe (1749-1832), the *Ballade* is characterized by its mixture of the three major genres, a definition by and large valid today. It is *lyrical* in its affinity to song, its use of the refrain; *dramatic* in its dialogue, tempo, concentrated scenes, turning-points; and *epic* in its narrative content and impersonal story-telling tone. Frequently, it revolves around some tragic historical, legendary or mythological incident.



As further topics, the *Glossary* appends “mysterious and natural phenomena” or “moral instruction”; elsewhere, spooky and outright demonic events are foregrounded. Heinrich Heine and, in his wake, Frank Wedekind, so we learn, injected “humor and satire” into the genre of the German ballad while Bertolt Brecht established it “as an instrument of social and political protest.” Solely *Mausoleum*, if deemed worthy of mentioning at all, does not receive any elaboration in terms of generic advancement and novelty.<sup>49</sup>

However, that Enzensberger’s erratic volume, along with its innovative drive, fulfills nearly every single one of those widely accepted requirements ought to have become obvious long since. Regarding balladic content, or subject matter, an urge to moral instruction and keen involvement can hardly be denied, nor can mysteriousness, even uncanniness and weirdness, although they now reside in, or emanate from, the so-called cultural phenomena, or milestones of civilization, instead of being restricted to the demonic forces of elementary nature. And certain historic agents or representatives of progress cannot but strike us as somewhat tragic, either; as often as not, they are immersed in guilt or crime, in brutal, inhuman, indeed most bloody, doings and affairs, or end up in suicide or madness. Nevertheless, some of them aspire, or actually attain, to legendary albeit, perhaps, not necessarily mythological dimensions and stature. Moreover, is there in *Mausoleum*, both contradictorily and concomitantly, any dearth whatever of political and social uncovering and protest, of wry humor and scathing satire? Regarding its balladic structure and poetic form and composition, on the other hand, they doubtless are equally tangible and undeniable. We have already identified the abundance of figures of speech of all kinds, the tendency to closure by means of envois or circularity, and the use of refrain-like arrangements; rather more important and revelatory, though, is the aforesaid Goethean mixture of the three major genres as constitutive of the ballad: the lyrical, the dramatic and the epic. The narrative foundation and underlying pattern—to begin with the third and most matter-of-fact of these generic aspects—can scarcely be missed, much less ignored; as we have seen, the very titles of Enzensberger’s

pieces, in that they divulge (if slightly cryptically) a name and the era and life span pertaining to it, are signal enough and make, from the outset, the biographical source and substance sufficiently clear in each case. What then follows is, without question, genuine storytelling, either in an impersonal tone (as in the majority of instances) or in an impassioned one. At the same time, however, and again without fail, the dramatic structure and even texture come to the fore: that is to say, almost every piece is aswarm with concentrated scenes and sharp, abrupt turning points, is replete with dialogue and, to boot, interlaced with italicized quotes that function and act dialectically, hence dialogically and dramatically. The tempo may vary, to be sure; yet, what predominates throughout the collection, indeed permeates it in essence, is a powerful urge that never reaches a standstill but, on the contrary, as witness the words of the ultimate envoi adduced already, persists and goes on unabashed beyond the formal closure of the entire work. That which alone is conspicuously absent from *Mausoleum* are the lyrical admixtures germane to the genre, or subgenre, of the ballad. Despite appearances, and for all the poetic devices we found and unearthed, there emerge neither rhymes nor a regular meter (though a wealth of incisive rhythms) from Enzensberger's thirty-seven specimens, to say nothing of any affinities to song, that prominent balladic quality stipulated both by Goethe, the mature classic, and by his eager disciples, the modern theorists, whether in Germany or abroad.

Hence, the consequence that can, nay must, be inferred from our generic investigation is straightforward, is more than manifest. To put it in a nutshell: Hans Magnus Enzensberger's is not merely a 'lyrification of science etc.' but also, no question about it, a comparable 'balladification' (*sit venia verbo*) as well. Naturally, as might be expected, there do exist occasional overlaps and gradual transitions between these two processes. Such ballads, in other words, may appear in the guise of such lyrics, and vice versa. For instance, the third text of *Mausoleum*, "N. M. (1469-1527)" which is devoted to Niccolo Machiavelli, was originally, and under the heading "An Niccolo Macchiavelli geboren am 3. Mai 1496 [*sic*]" ("To Niccolo Machiavelli born on 3 May 1496"), published, indeed featured, in Enzensberger's

lyrical collection *Gedichte 1955-1970* ("Poems 1955-1970") where it obviously figured as a poem, or prose poem; later on, it was included, with only minor syntactical and typographical variations, in his *Thirty-Seven Ballads* which came out in 1975. (All the more important, it must be acknowledged, is the sole addition Enzensberger made in *Mausoleum*: to wit, he inserted, sarcastically addressing and lauding his hero, the phrase "deine Neue Wissenschaft" [*your New Science*], thus predating Giambattista Vico's seminal *Scienza nuova* of 1725 by two centuries.)<sup>50</sup> Similarly "G. de'Dondi (1318-1389)" which discusses, as will be recalled, that clockmaker from Padua and his invention was, likewise, first printed in *Gedichte 1955-1970*, then titled "Himmelsmaschine" ("Celestial Machine"); in contrast to the Machiavelli poem, however, it underwent major textual revisions for inclusion in *Mausoleum* (although they in no way altered its gist and impact as an extensive lyric in free verse). It is true, Petrarch was now, far more plausibly, associated with the Guggenheim Foundation, and De'Dondi, with the Pentagon, both as opposed to the earlier version. Yet everything remained basically the same, just as in the *Mausoleum* piece on Machiavelli.<sup>51</sup>

Or consider the case of Piranesi, whom we have also met repeatedly. In his third volume of poetry, *Blindenschrift* of 1964, Enzensberger published the lyric "Carceri d'invenzione," which ingeniously connects and equates the Italian artist's imaginary dungeons with the human brain. In order to achieve this stunning effect, the whole poem—which consists of a single sentence and is uttered in one breath, as it were—is based on, and hinges upon, an isolated rhetorical figure the poet loves and adroitly masters, even once elucidated explicitly, if on a different occasion. In *Mausoleum*, on the other hand, there appears the Piranesi ballad "G. B. P. (1720-1778)" consisting of six lengthy prose parts the fifth of which is entitled "Das Gehirn" ("The Brain") and performs the selfsame stunning operation, albeit without said rhetorical twist. Clearly, these two texts, in their respective capacities as poetic subgenres, differ to a very large degree in spite of their interrelatedness.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, the most complex and intriguing case in point does not involve two texts but is restricted to

a single if quadripartite one: within itself, precisely, the piece keeps wavering, so to speak, between a lyrical and a balladic mood. The poem in question bears the title “Zur Erinnerung an Sir Hiram Maxim (1840-1916)” (“In Memory of Sir Hiram Maxim [1840-1916]”) and appeared as late as 1995 in *Kiosk*; what it deals with is the biography of the American-born British inventor of the so-called “recoil-operated gun,” or “recoil barrel,” and the sad experiences caused by that giant stride in cultural progress. The former, a self-styled heroic epic of sorts, is narrated in the middle sections II and III, the latter, an unheroic incident from the Second World War, reported in sections I and IV, which serve as a chilling counterpoint and unmasking frame. Both parts are deployed dramatically; however, the framing sections, which detail the poet’s experience from half a century ago, as well as his recollection of it, deviate insofar as being related somewhat lyrically, too, for all their shocking realism. (I can pride myself—if that is the term—on the very same youthful experience.) Anyhow, it will suffice, for our purposes, merely to quote that 1945 incident, together with Enzensberger’s retrospective musings. Section I simply reports:

On our way to school, in the ditch:  
the strafer’s roaring, then  
small dust clouds, left, ahead, right,  
soundless, and only thereafter  
the clattering of the aircraft cannon.  
Our admiration stayed within limits.

In section IV, the poet looks back at the innocent perpetrator again, whereupon he resumes and concludes his report:

Nowadays, of course, when this great achievement  
is available in every school yard,  
it’s difficult to feel  
what he once felt: the instinctual delight  
of a bearded mammal with 270 patents.

We, anyway, a hundred years younger than he,  
were lying there by the roadside like dead.<sup>53</sup>

Is this poem a lyric or a ballad, or a hybrid of both? It might as well be contained in *Mausoleum*, mightn't it, yet it appeared in a volume expressly subtitled *Neue Gedichte*. And not only is its narration counterbalanced and framed in a quasi-lyrical manner: the poet's personal voice and feelings also aid to engender, quasi-lyrically, such a momentary impression. But then, are lyrical frames and similar devices really so uncommon in traditional balladry? One towering exemplar that instantaneously comes to mind would surely be Theodor Fontane's tripartite "Die Brück' am Tay" ("The Bridge over the [Firth of] Tay") of 1880.<sup>54</sup>

Be that as it may, a certain hybridism or interchangeability and, to repeat, certain overlaps and transitions can undoubtedly be perceived in the Enzensbergerian 'lyrification' as well as 'balladification' of science in the broadest sense imaginable, and almost from start to finish, to boot. As amply evinced, the poem on Giovanni de'Dondi and his wondrous clock, or celestial machine, which dates from around 1970, has figured both as a scientific lyric and as a scientific ballad over the years... if, admittedly, under different headings and with textual modifications. On the other hand, couldn't, indeed mustn't, poems such as "Karl Heinrich Marx"—from *Blindenschrift* once again, i.e., published as early as 1964—or, above all, "John von Neumann (1903-1957)" —a piece that came out as late as 1999 in *Leichter als Luft*, we remember— be equipped, their insertion in 'lyrical' collections notwithstanding, likewise with the label 'balladic'? As a matter of fact, wouldn't even the Freud poem "Berggasse 19" from Enzensberger's most recent volume of poetry, *Die Geschichte der Wolken* of 2003, qualify in a fairly large measure?<sup>55</sup> And still, our generic, or subgeneric, disquisition has yielded, albeit only implicitly so far, a further momentous result. To render it plain and explicit, therefore, we now have to declare in unequivocal terms: Hans Magnus Enzensberger has accomplished, just from our limited point of view alone, a twofold revolution in the realm of poetry, and the first as

striking and noteworthy as the second. For not only has he achieved, with his lyrical output in general, an enormous thematic expansion, but he has also created, with his balladic *Mausoleum* in particular, a new poetic vehicle analogous and, most decidedly, comparable to the prose poem, or *poème en prose*, as it sprang up in 19<sup>th</sup>-century France, and has been an established (sub)genre ever since. Orally, in my lectures and otherwise, I have proclaimed and maintained the idea of Enzensberger's (sub)generic innovation for decades until, at long last, I put it down in writing. Namely, as I stated in my essay "Theorie und Praxis des Prosagedichts bei Walter Helmut Fritz" ("Theory and Practice of the Prose Poem [in the Work of] Walter Helmut Fritz"):

Wenn...Fritz das deutsche Prosagedicht —falls nicht das Genre des Prosagedichts in seiner Gesamtheit— auf einen einsamen, seit Baudelaire und Mallarmé (oder auch Rimbaud) unerreichten Gipfel geführt hat, so hat Enzensberger ungefähr gleichzeitig mit ihm die benachbarte Untergattung der Prosaballade nicht etwa einfach vollendet, sondern überhaupt erst geschaffen (daß sich namentlich in den längeren prosalyrischen Texten jener französischen Dichter schon gewisse prosaballadeske Züge regen, soll darum keineswegs verkannt oder bestritten werden).<sup>56</sup>

Walter Helmut Fritz, incidentally, who was also born in 1929, is a near exact contemporary of Enzensberger's; in addition to having authored more than two hundred fine prose poems since the late 1960s, he has aptly theorized on this (sub)genre, beginning with his Mainz Academy speech of 1970 titled *Möglichkeiten des Prosagedichts anhand einiger französischer Beispiele* ("Possibilities of the Prose Poem in the Light of Some French Examples"). Thus, he has proved to be well versed in the origin and tradition of what he so richly and consummately practices.<sup>57</sup> All the same, and even after the publication of Enzensberger's *Siebenunddreißig Balladen* in 1975, he has apparently not, or not fully, been aware of the specificity and importance of something like the rise of a novel genre, or subgenre (or, at least, of what this sudden emergence entails and signifies theoretically).

Nor have, or seem to have been in spite of so many contributions, Enzensberger reception and research, although they have meanwhile shifted, no doubt, onto truly international, indeed global, levels.<sup>58</sup> In lieu of designating the *Mausoleum* texts straightway as that which they really are, namely *prose ballads*, or “Prosaballaden,” both critics and scholars alike have resorted to all kinds of paraphrases and circumlocutions such as “lyrical portraits,” “lyrical biographies,” “poetical portraits,” “lyrical montages,” “‘documentary’ lyrics,” “modern narrative poems,” or, with a shrug, “prose poems” *tout court*; or Enzensberger’s collection has been dubbed an uneven and uneasy medley of now “lyrical poetry,” now “prose poems,” or, with another shrug, a “blend of these two genres.”<sup>59</sup> Not even the most recent and, unquestionably, most thorough and advanced monographic treatment of Enzensberger’s poetry as a whole, *Poetic Maneuvers*, which devotes an entire chapter to *Mausoleum*, is devoid of such subsidiary notions: it offers —apart from simply if implicitly adhering to the familiar term “prose poem,” or iterating the poet’s own term, “ballad”— vague formulations like “poetical prose” (which is something different anyway) or “prosey, narrative ballads,”<sup>60</sup> to be sure, its observations and propositions are more to the point concerning possible antecedents, precursors or, perhaps, actual sources or models of the scientific prose balladeer, since, along with unconvincing and, therefore, negligible names such as, for instance, Georg Heym, Johannes Bobrowski and Helga M. Novak, those of William Carlos Williams and Gottfried Benn are not only mentioned but underscored.<sup>61</sup> Either of the latter couple of poets and, by the way, physicians has exerted, it is true, a demonstrable impact on the work of Enzensberger. Yet here, as before, some reservations cannot be suppressed. This applies in particular to Benn, of whom the onetime influential critic and scholar, even lyricist and novelist Hans Egon Holthusen categorically decreed with regard to the *Mausoleum* ballads:

... ihre Vorbilder sind bei Benn zu suchen, in jenen meist Künstlern gewidmeten lyrischen Charakterskizzen, etwa über

den jungen Hebbel, über Shakespeare und Rembrandt ('Gewisse Lebensabende'), über Chopin oder Nietzsche (zweimal 'Turin'), die schon wesentliche Züge der Enzensbergerschen 'Ballade' vorwegnehmen [etc.].<sup>62</sup>

Really? Are Enzensberger's "Vorbilder" (*models*) actually —provided there do exist any— to be found in those Bennian poems, and exclusively at that, as Holthusen would have us believe? After all, Benn's "lyrische Charakterskizzen" (*lyrical character sketches*, or *studies*) deal, for the most part, with so-called "Künstler" (*artists*, although the men listed are, together with Rembrandt, the two playwrights Shakespeare and Friedrich Hebbel, a musician-composer and, indeed, a philosopher-poet or poet-philosopher). And suchlike 'artists,' precisely, appear rather seldom in *Mausoleum*; they are not the rule, as with Benn, but by far the exception; in fact, they constitute the infinitesimal minority as opposed to the overwhelming majority of 'scientists etc.,' if I may say so. But, more cogently and convincingly still, Benn's pathetic portrayals differ vastly from Enzensberger's cool and caustic ones in that they are not at all focused on contradictory progress; instead, they are centered around immutable art, which they extol and celebrate, as well as, granted, around the burdensome lot and exacting task of its followers, whom they admire while deploring them. Even where Enzensberger seems to duplicate Benn, as in the case of the former's "F. C. (1810-1849)" and the latter's "Chopin," any comparison, however cursory, will immediately reveal this profound difference.<sup>63</sup>

Besides, a proper evaluation of the Enzensbergerian relationship to the poet and physician, hence scientist of sorts, Gottfried Benn (1886-1956) must by no means be limited to *Mausoleum*, on the one hand, and those few depictions of 'artists' adduced by Holthusen, on the other; what has to be gauged and compared is the lyrical and, where applicable, balladic oeuvre of both authors, Benn's no less than Enzensberger's. Thus, their wholly divergent interests, ideas and aims will come to light even more palpably and at once. Just consider—to choose a single random sample—the mere threesome of strophes from Benn's prolific poetic output which are entitled "Nebel"



(“Fog[s]”). They run:

Ach, du zerrinnender  
und schon gestürzter Laut,  
eben beginnender  
Lust vom Munde getaut,  
ach so zerrinnst du,  
Stunde, und hast kein Sein,  
ewig schon spinnst du  
weit in die Nebel dich ein.

Ach, wir sagen es immer,  
daß es nie enden kann,  
und vergessen den Schimmer  
Schnees des Neige d’antan,  
in das durchsüßte, durchtränkte  
nächtedurchschluchzte Sein  
strömt das Fließend-Entlehnte,  
spinnen die Nebel sich ein.

Ach, wir rufen und leiden  
ältesten Göttern zu:  
ewig über uns beiden  
‘immer und alles: du,’  
aber den Widdern, den Zweigen,  
Altar und Opferstein,  
hoch zu den Göttern, die schweigen,  
spinnen die Nebel sich ein.<sup>64</sup>

I shall not bother (or venture) to translate these highly artistic and complicated stanzas, for not only would their poetic rendition prove to be far too difficult and, in the long run, impossible, but it would also be superfluous in the first place. What must be abundantly clear to any reader with even a minimal knowledge of German is the dual fact that Benn does not depict the meteorological phenomenon of fog(s) in the least, much less scientifically; rather, he uses it metaphorically and as

a symbol of his innermost thoughts and feelings, whereby he strays from nature —let alone natural science— to such an extent as to turn his “Nebel” into a piece of latter-day individual “Erlebnis-,” indeed metaphysical “Weltanschauungsdichtung” in modern disguise. Or is it just a very personal and ostensibly erudite love song? Anyway, scores of similar texts could be added, be they triggered by whatever (pseudo-) scientific experience: whether geographical and historical or (preferably) botanical, whether ethnological, theological and religious or (in one instance, at any rate) touristic. Sometimes, Benn’s headings, even though seemingly so reminiscent of Enzensberger’s, are downright misleading; “Radar,” for example, or “Bauxit” (“Bauxite,” the principal source of aluminum) both intentionally avoid to tell us anything about the phenomena or substances in question, the texts announced in them being either purely figurative and emotional or fragments of idle business chatter in trivial *parlando* style. Which is not to say, though, that Gottfried Benn was altogether unaware of the problems and contradictions of science and progress; however, he did not admit them to his poetry but relegated them to his essays, as witness his “Irrationalismus und moderne Medizin” (“Irrationalism and Modern Medicine”), “Goethe und die Naturwissenschaften” (“Goethe and the Natural Sciences”) or “Physik 1943” (“Physics in 1943”), to list but a few.<sup>65</sup>

By contrast, Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s ‘scientification of poetry’ —to turn things upside down for a moment, albeit not unjustifiably— is, I repeat, an approach of a fascinatingly and profoundly different ilk. With reason, I have selected Benn’s “Nebel” strophes as an appropriate illustration, for it reminds us in time of that meteorological title “The History of the Clouds” employed by Enzensberger for both his like-named cycle of a dozen poems and his latest collection of verse in its entirety. And why is this atmospheric ‘history’ —or, if that sounds better, simple ‘story’— so relevant and significant in our context? Well, at least one scholar came persuasively to argue even before the appearance of *Die Geschichte der Wolken* in 2003<sup>66</sup> that the bard and balladeer of science has been receptive of, and involved in, the newfangled, rapidly growing, supposedly all-purpose and all-inclusive discipline of c h a o s

theory from his 1978 epic *Der Untergang der Titanic* on, as is evidenced by a plenitude of poems such as “Bifurkationen” (“Bifurcations”), “Seltsamer Attraktor” (“Strange Attractor”) or, especially noteworthy because so overall and all-embracing, “Die Mathematiker” (“The Mathematicians”) which ends with the sweeping mock lament and exclamation:

... o Kummer, o Gödel, o Mandelbrot,  
im Fegefeuer der Rekursion.

(... oh grief, oh Gödel, oh Mandelbrot,  
in the purgatory of recursion.)

As ought to be obvious, the very headings of these poems are already telling enough; also, it should be stressed that suchlike pieces are particularly frequent in *Zukunftsmusik*, i.e., around 1990. Yet neither are they missing in later collections, to be sure, nor are, quite naturally, ‘chaotic’ hints, indeed broad hints, totally absent from their texts themselves. “Die Geschichte der Wolken IV” assures us, for example, “Eine Prise Staub genügt,/ein bißchen Salz oder Rauch,” that is, *a pinch of dust or a bit of salt or smoke somewhere is sufficient*: namely, to occasion the clouds *to discharge* their steam, *to lightning and hail and snow* [cf. 136]. But, to all intents and purposes, what is this other than an apropos adaptation of the so-called ‘butterfly effect,’ one of the staples of chaos theory, according to which a butterfly’s wingbeat may cause a hurricane in some faraway part of the world? Or to phrase it in general terms and with the help of the internet, as is only meet and proper: “Small variations in initial conditions result in huge, dynamic transformations in concluding events” (<http://www.duke.edu/~mjd/chaos/chaosp.html>). Time and again, Enzensberger proves to be thoroughly up-to-date in present-day physics and mathematics (etc.). No wonder, therefore, if the international community of science approved of his learned endeavors and jovially congratulated him on his success, and rather early on to boot.<sup>67</sup>

Still, we haven’t yet answered our rhetorical question, or merely half; hence, let us ask it once more. Why is, we said, the

Enzensbergerian ‘history,’ or ‘story,’ of the clouds —perhaps not just in our view— of such a revealing significance and relevance. . . in point of fact, needs must be so? For two reasons, it seems, which are, moreover, closely entwined: a personal and, maybe, idiosyncratic one as well as a far-reaching and, in effect, both unique and universal one.

Firstly, then, the poetizing of Enzensberger bespeaks an innate, as it were, and, over the years and decades, ever-increasing affinity to clouds and their changes and formations, but likewise to the accompanying or, all of a sudden, resulting upshots thereof in the atmosphere. (He wrote verses, for instance, on a/the “Sommergewitter” [*summer thunderstorm*] with his “Lob der Gewalt” [“In Praise of Violence”] from *Kiosk* and on a/the “Wintergewitter” [“Winter Thunderstorm,” thus his title] from *Die Geschichte der Wolken* [23]; in addition, poems such as “Nimbus,” again from *Kiosk*, or, for that matter, “Klimamaschine” [“The Climate Machine”], again from *Die Geschichte der Wolken* [128], have to be taken into account.) However, Enzensberger’s attitude toward clouds and like atmospheric phenomena does not reflect or continue that all too familiar kind of treatment they have received in German letters and elsewhere for centuries, whether in poetry or in prose; his is never, to put it bluntly, a metaphorical or figurative, symbolic or allegorical usage and appropriation of their being and behavior as, say, in Schiller’s tragedy *Maria Stuart* of 1800, to mark one extreme of the chronological spectrum, or in a brand-new book of aphoristic *Aufzeichnungen* (“Notes”) by Günter Kunert, to mark the other. In III/1 of the Schillerian play, the imprisoned heroine, free for a while, laments and wistfully exclaims, as might be remembered:

Eilende Wolken! Segler der Lüfte!  
Wer mit euch wanderte, mit euch schiffte!

(*Hastening clouds, you sailers in air!*  
*Happy are they who with you may fare!*)

And so on. And not dissimilarly at all, in Kunert’s *Die Botschaft des Hotelzimmers an den Gast* (“The Hotel Room’s Message to the

Guest”) of 2004, we are informed:

Das fast zage Dahinziehen einer Wolke, als treibe es sie in  
Gegenden, die sie scheue, [ist] ein Grund für die Betrachtung  
unserer Irr- und Zwangswege.

Clearly, the atmospheric ‘message’ is basically the same in either instance: Kunert, too, like Schiller, interprets the ever so hesitant, almost timid “Dahinziehen” (*floating along*) of his solitary and wholly personified cloud as an image or mirror of human thought and feeling, as does the Scottish queen in *Maria Stuart* at her sight of an entire fleet, as it were, of quickly sailing clouds. In 2004 no less than in 1800, the cloudscapes, or changing cloud formations, amply yet exclusively supply metaphorical or symbolic food for anthropocentric experiences and, above all, for the character’s or the poet’s meditations thereon.<sup>68</sup>

But Enzensberger’s experience and reaction are, as in the case of Gottfried Benn and the counterexample he provided, notably and unusually different. His shibboleth, in a word, reads: “Den Wolken zusehen, den Wolken” (*Watching the clouds, just the clouds*). And this mere observation in a state, so to speak, of *impassibilité*, as here summed up, along with sleeping, by the poem “Tagesordnung” (“Agenda, or Order of the Day”) from *Leichter als Luft* of 1999, is by no manner of means anything novel and unheard-of in the Enzensbergerian oeuvre; quite to the contrary. As a matter of fact, it can be encountered even in the chansons for the singer Ingrid Caven which were composed during the late 1970s and 1980s. Unmistakably, the Song “Nachmittag eines Stars” (“Afternoon of a star [in the sense of a highly publicized theatrical or motion-picture performer etc.]”) confesses in the chanteuse’s name as well as, and more so perhaps, in behalf of the poet himself:

Ich sehe die Wolken vorüberfliegen.  
Es sind immer dieselben, es sind immer neue,  
Immer dieselben.

And:

Diese Wolken sind nichts und wieder nichts.  
Aber schön sind sie, wie sie weiß und schnell  
an mir vorüberfliegen.

What does all this amount to? But must I really formulate and define it expressly? *I see the clouds flying by*, the confessional voice confides in us, and they are *beautiful* when thus flying, are *white and fast*. And yet, though always new, they are always the same, always the selfsame. These clouds, in short, have no purpose whatsoever apart from simply being that which they are, and being impassively observed; they are in vain and come to naught. . . at any rate, as far as symbolizing anthropocentrism or metaphorizing anthropomorphism are concerned.<sup>69</sup>

Which leads us straight to the other momentous and revealing reason I indicated. For, secondly if belatedly, this ‘unhuman’ impassiveness as evoked in “Nachmittag eines Stars,” which in turn evokes, and is probably meant to evoke, Mallarmé’s “L’Après-Midi d’un Faune”: this attitude, save its leisurely abandon, is exactly the attitude of the respective science as well. The study of clouds and fog, indeed of weather conditions and formations in the most general sense conceivable, provides and constitutes, as we already know, a centerpiece of chaos theory, a favorite hunting ground for its eager disciples. Or should I rather say t h e centerpiece and t h e favorite hunting ground? After all, the inception of chaos theory, or chaos science, took place in the field of meteorology when, as early (or late as 1960, a certain Edward Lorenz, by the aid of his computer, was struggling with the problem of weather prediction. Like Saul in the Bible, who had gone to “seek the asses” of his father, and found a kingdom (cf. 1 Sam. 9: 3ff.), Lorenz thereby discovered and inadvertently founded the now ‘royal’ science of chaos. Being a meteorologist, though, he published the decisive 1963 paper on his findings (the unpredictability of weather and the computer equations produced by this type of behavior) in a meteorological journal; hence, his seminal discoveries were not acknowledged by the world of mathematics and

physics until almost a couple of decades afterwards. And not only did they then influence and, in many ways, change these two all-important fields, but they likewise extended to, and deeply affected, the areas of geography and population growth, ecology and economics, among others, indeed proved applicable to such completely diverse phenomena as the dripping of a water faucet or the throb of the human heart . . . and finally, as we have realized, to poetry! Ever since Lorenz's modest proposal —or, to be precise, its ultimate reception— those bifurcations have been multiplying and spreading, those attractors, been operating, those fractals of all kinds, been enjoying their self-similarities. Or as the internet (see above) has it, proudly disseminating the cheerful message and glad tidings:

Chaos has already had a lasting effect on science, yet there is much still left to be discovered. Many scientists believe that twentieth century science will be known for only three theories: relativity, quantum mechanics, and chaos. Aspects of chaos show up everywhere around the world, from the currents of the ocean and the flow of blood through fractal blood vessels to the branches of trees and the effects of turbulence. Chaos has inescapably become part of modern science.

Yet by no means, I hasten to concur and emphasize, part of science alone, not even with the inclusion of scientific poetry. For chaos has generated, as we are being instructed, further outside repercussions:

Computer art has become more realistic through the use of chaos and fractals. Now, with a simple formula, a computer can create a beautiful and realistic tree. Instead of following a regular pattern, the bark of a tree can be created according to a formula that almost, but not quite, repeats itself.

True enough! And what is it that happened at MIT, the famed Massachusetts Institute of Technology? There, lo and behold, a graduate student and dyed-in-the-wool computernik developed audacious analogues of music, too, and had them printed, under the piquing

title “Bach to Chaos: Chaotic Variations on a Classical Theme,” in the respectable journal *Science News* in 1994. Most musicians who have heard these new and artificial sounds agree, we are assured, that such eccentric variations, based as they are on Johann Sebastian Bach’s Prelude in C-major, cannot but strike the listener as very captivating and creative.

Nonetheless, this chaotic music appears to have been a fairly isolated case, at least to my knowledge or for the time being. What is much more creative and, by the same token, more consistent than either suchlike sounds or the aforesaid artistic patterns is Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s near careerlong methodical and successful application of science—that is, not merely of chaos theory or of physics and mathematics but of science at large and beyond—to the endangered realm and difficult tasks and exercises of present-day poetry (and/or vice versa). An outstanding literary achievement, I daresay! And, furthermore, within poetry itself? Within it, the meanwhile seventy-five-year-old can pride himself on a no less astounding accomplishment which is—as has been demonstrated in detail and, I hope, in depth—not just twofold but, at one and the same time, intricately intertwined and interwoven in regard to those two strands, or procedures. To wit, in terms of form, or structure, Enzensberger has founded, Jean-Paul Sartre’s forced and narrow compartmentalizing division into poetry and prose<sup>70</sup> notwithstanding, a novel (sub) genre that must be placed, without fail, on an equal footing with the long-established (sub) genre of the prose poem: namely, the prose ballad. In terms of content, or subject matter, Enzensberger has expanded the overall genre of poetry, i.e., or lyric verse and balladry alike, to comprise all sorts and ages of scientific endeavors and results as well as their often so frail human agents, but also, and surely not least, the historical dialectic such a progress engenders and unleashes; thus, his lines and strophes span the whole gamut from primitive craftsmanship to modern wave mechanics, from ancient cosmology to contemporary chaosology, as it were. In point of fact, didn’t he conceive and design, as early as 1974, a stunning device for the automated production of poetry even though he committed it to the printed page only (yet perhaps not accidentally) a quarter of a century thereafter, in 1999?



Still, it was, in all likelihood, hardly with this provocative *Einladung zu einem Poesie-Automaten* ("Invitation to a Poetry Automaton")<sup>71</sup> that the 'lyrifier' and 'balladifier' of 'science etc.' ultimately came into his own; rather, it was, or may well have been, chaos theory and whatever is associated with it . . .

Anyhow, there exists—I submit this in lieu of a conclusion—an academic assembly somewhere in Scandinavia that annually awards a number of coveted, world-famous prizes, and not only to luminaries in the scientific disciplines of chemistry or physics and so on, but even to their coequals in the field of international literature (though preferably, alas, to good-natured if old-fashioned storytellers and novelists). And doesn't the author of *Leichter als Luft* or *Die Geschichte der Wolken*, on the one hand, and of *Mausoleum*, on the other, admirably combine both areas, science and letters? Said institution, it seems to me, would be well-advised to cast a close and searching look at Hans Magnus Enzensberger, whether at once or in the not so distant future. Granted, those honorable and learned men from the North have not remained entirely ignorant of him, for, after all, more than ten years ago, he was already and most commendably invited to deliver a talk at the Swedish Academy Nobel Jubilee Symposium.<sup>72</sup>

However, that is not yet sufficient.

## Notes

1. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Die Geschichte der Wolken: 99 Meditationen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003) 121. The volume bears an apropos motto which proves to be very typical of this author; to wit: *It is the wisdom of Cats to whet their Claws in meditation of the next Rat they are to encounter*. Andrew Marvell, *The Rehearsal Transposed* (1672). The cat, after all, has been a favorite animal as well as symbol of Enzensberger's almost from the outset; compare, in particular, his "Eine Begegnung der anderen Art" ("An Encounter of a Different Kind") in Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Kiosk: Neue Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995) llof.; for more details, see Reinhold Grimm, "Von Katzen und Translatzen: Anmerkungen zu Versen von Hans Magnus Enzensberger und deren Übertragung ins Englische," *Neue Rundschau* 109.1 (1998): 101-09.

2. Unless indicated otherwise, all English versions are mine. Page numbers for the following texts and/or translations from *Die Geschichte der Wolken* will appear in brackets both in the text and in the notes.

3. See *German Poetry from 1750 to 1900*. Ed. Robert M. Browning. Foreword by Michael Hamburger (New York: Continuum, 1984) 59.

4. Cf. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Die Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983) 25f.

5. Compare id., *Mausoleum: Siebenunddreißig Balladen aus der Geschichte des Fortschritts* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975) 17ff.; as to the astronomer Kepler, Brahe's erstwhile pupil and assistant, see [138].

6. See id., *Die Gedichte* 37; for a brief interpretation, cf. my "Silent Summer" [1979] in Reinhold Grimm, *Texturen: Essays und anderes zu Hans Magnus Enzensberger* (New York [etc.]: Lang,

1984) 172f.; also, compare Charlotte Ann Melin, *Poetic Maneuvers: Hans Magnus Enzensberger and the Lyric Genre* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2003) 153f.

7. See my “Montierte Lyrik” [1958] in Grimm, *Texturen* 21-43.

8. See *Goethes Werke*. Hg. Erich Trunz (Hamburg: Wegner, 1948ff.) I: 349ff., 408.

9. Ibid. 350.

10. See Enzensberger, *Kiosk* 12f., 15, 14; id. *Kiosk: Poems*. Trans. Michael Hamburger and Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Riverdale-on-Hudson: Sheep Meadow P, 1999) 6, 8, 7. For my translation of “The Rich” as opposed to Enzensberger’s own, see *German 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry*. Ed. Reinhold Grimm and Irmgard Hunt (New York / London: Continuum, 2001) 227.

11. See Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Leichter als Luft: Moralische Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999) 25, 29; id., *Lighter than Air: Moral Poems*. Trans. Reinhold Grimm (Riverdale-on-Hudson: Sheep Meadow P, 2000) 27, 35.

12. See id., *Die Gedichte* 277.

13. See id., *Kiosk* 116; id., *Kiosk: Poems* 79.

14. The very heading of this text contains a biblical allusion: namely, to Acts 20: 35 where Jesus is quoted as having said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive* (in Luther’s German version, “Geben ist seliger denn Nehmen”).

15. Compare, for example, already “Wortbildungslehre” (“Word Formation” or “Morphology”) from the early collection *Landessprache* (“Language of the Land”) of 1960, in Enzensberger,

*Die Gedichte* 127; also, see “Die Macht der Gewohnheit” (“The Force of Habit”) and “Das Falsche” (“That Which Is Wrong”) in *ibid.* 308 and 367f., respectively. The volumes that prove especially fruitful, however, are those from the 1990s. Consider, for instance, “Zusammenfassung” (“Summary”), “Litanei vom Es” (“A Litany on It”), “Zungenwerk” (“Work of the Tongue”), “Verschwundene Arbeit” (“Vanished Work,” an onomastic rhapsody despite appearances) and “Gewöhnliche Geschichte” (“An Ordinary Story”) in Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Zukunftsmusik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991) 14f., 16ff., 36f., 58f., 66f.; “Sich selbst verschluckende Sätze” (“Sentences That Swallow Themselves”) in *Kiosk* 69; “Semantik” (“Semantics”) in *id.*, *Leichter als Luft* 53. Even Enzensberger’s epic “comedy” contains a pertinent specimen; compare “Verlustanzeige” (“Notice of Loss”) in Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Der Untergang der Titanic: Eine Komödie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978) 18f. —For translations of most of these poems, some of which reveal themselves as veritable *tour de force*, see Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Selected Poems*. Trans. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Michael Hamburger, and Rita Dove with Fred Viebahn (Riverdale-on-Hudson: Sheep Meadow P, 1999), *id.*, *Kiosk: Poems*, *id.*, *Lighter than Air* and Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *The Sinking of the Titanic: A Poem*. Trans. by the author (Manchester: Carcanet New P, 1981).

16. *Id.*, *Leichter als Luft* 14ff. and *Lighter than Air* 11/13; *id.*, *Kiosk* 19ff. and *Kiosk: Poems* 12f. (for my own translation of this text, compare *German 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry* 229/231).

17. *Id.*, *Kiosk* 98f. and *Kiosk: Poems* 68; *id.*, *Zukunftsmusik* 7f. and *Selected Poems* 201.

18. *Id.*, *Die Gedichte* 397f. and *Selected Poems* 195; *id.*, *Die Gedichte* 183. Furthermore, compare “Apokalypse. Umbrisch, etwa 1490” (“Apocalypse. Umbrian Master, about 1490”), “Abendmahl. Venezianisch, 16. Jahrhundert” (“Last Supper. Venetian. Sixteenth Century”), “Der Raub der Suleika. Niederländisch, Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts” (“The Rape of Suleika. Dutch, late 19<sup>th</sup> Century”) and

a“Die Ruhe auf der Flucht. Flämisches, 1521” (“The Rest on the Flight. Flemish, 1521”); cf. id., *Der Untergang der Titanic* 12f., 31ff., 81ff., 100f. and *The Sinking of the Titanic* 6f., 23ff., 68ff., 84f.

19. Id., *Kiosk* 107 and *Kiosk: Poems* 74; also, [15, 65].

20. Cf. my “Bildnis Hans Magnus Enzensberger: Struktur, Ideologie und Vorgeschichte eines Gesellschaftskritikers” [1974] in Grimm, *Texturen* 44-96.

21. Enzensberger, *Die Gedichte* 214f. and *Selected Poems* 41/43; id., *Zukunftsmusik* 49f. and *Selected Poems* 211 (for my own English version, see *German 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry* 221); id., *Die Gedichte* 306; id., *Kiosk* 23f. and *Kiosk: Poems* 15. —It should be noted, however, that Michael Hamburger mistranslated Enzensberger’s “Mitrailleuse” (which means *Gatling gun*) as *machine-gun* in the first poem and that he failed, in the fourth poem, to make it clear to the reader that “Frühschriften” refers to the early Marxian writings. But I shall refrain, here as elsewhere, from going into any further translational problems or details.

22. Enzensberger, *Leichter als Luft* 59 and *Lighter than Air* 73; id., *Die Gedichte* 287ff.; id., *Kiosk* 10f. and *Kiosk: Poems* 5 (but consider the “Translator’s Note,” *ibid.*)

23. For the list of titles following, see id., *Die Gedichte* 41, 212f., 225ff., 234ff., 270, 294, 312f., 348, 363f., 365, 386, 404; id., *Der Untergang der Titanic* 73f., 78, 93f.; id., *Zukunftsmusik* 26f., 32f., 42f., 46f., 78f., 85, 91f., 93f., 97f., 101, 112, 113f.; id., *Kiosk* 8f., 17, 22, 41, 73, 78f., 80f., 84f., 93f., 101f., 120f., 125; id., *Leichter als Luft* 17, 20, 21, 26f., 28, 33, 42, 81, 92, 110f., 112f., 118f. —For English versions, see *The Sinking of the Titanic*, *Kiosk: Poems* and *Lighter than Air*; others are contained in *Selected Poems*. But compare also my translations in *New Letters*, *Northwest Review*, *The American Poetry Review*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Madison Review*, and *The Rialto* (Norwich, England).

24. For details, see Reinhold Grimm, “Around and After the ‘Wende’: Five Representative Poems,” *Neohelicon* [Budapest] XXVIII.1 (2001): 195-211.

25. For details, see id., “War, Its Teenage Experience and Present-Day Essence: Three Poems by Hans Magnus Enzensberger,” in *War and Its Uses: Conflict and Creativity*. Ed. Jürgen Kleist and Bruce A. Butterfield (New York [etc.]: Lang, 1999) 197-211.

26. For details, see id., “Zweierlei Übersetzungsarbeit —Beobachtungen an Versen von Hans Magnus Enzensberger,” in *Das Gedichtete behauptet sein Recht: Festschrift für Walter Gebhard zum 65. Geburtstag*. Ed. Klaus H. Kiefer [et al.] Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2001) 31-39.

27. Compare the headings and topics listed in n. 15 above.

28. See Enzensberger, *Die Gedichte* 55, 282f., 78f., 318f.; id., *Der Untergang der Titanic* 61 and *The Sinking of the Titanic* 50; id., *Leichter als Luft* 54f., 57 and *Lighter than Air* 63/65, 69; id., *Zukunftsmusik* 22, 23.

29. For a definition of “Erlebnisdichtung,” cf. *A Glossary of German Literary Terms*. Ed. E. W. Herd and August Obermayer (Dunedin, N. Z.: U of Otago, <sup>2</sup>1992) 82: “Writing which aims to express subjective and personal experience; became prominent in the eighteenth century. 19<sup>th</sup> century literary critics judged literary value by the intensity of the experience communicated and mistakenly interpreted it as the direct biographical and psychological expression of the author.” Etc.

30. Suchlike poems do not, as has been contended with regard to *Verteidigung der Wölfe*, “position themselves antagonistically with respect to inherited rhetoric, German literary traditions, and even potential readers”; quite to the contrary. Cf. Melin, *Poetic Maneuvers*

61.

31. Enzensberger, *Die Gedichte* 134.

32. First published in *Wisconsin Academy Review* 35.2 (1989): 28.

33. Enzensberger, *Die Gedichte* 106, 107f., 198f., 201, 202; 109f.

34. Id., *Selected Poems* 13.

35. See id., *Kiosk* 128. Hamburger even has *life runs riot* again; cf. id., *Kiosk: Poems* 87.

36. See Enzensberger, *Mausoleum* 9f. —"Madonna im Rosenhag" (*Madonna in the Rose Garden*) is the name of a famous contemporaneous painting. It should also be noted that the German word "Drahtzieher" in the ninth stanza proves ambiguous, for it signifies both a *wiredrawer* and a *wire-puller* (the latter being emphasized in Enzensberger's context). As for the italicized quotations, they are perhaps based on, or even identical with, respective utterances of the printer Procop Waldvogel (ca. 1410 - ca. 1480) from Prague, whom Enzensberger lists as a source of his ballad; cf. *ibid.* 125.

37. Compare Robert Browning as cited in John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations: A Collection of Passages, Phrases and Proverbs Traced to Their Sources in Ancient and Modern Literature* (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown and Comp., <sup>13</sup>1955) 572b.

38. Both Christie and Nightingale ("die Ingenieurin der Caritas" [*the female engineer of charity*]) are mentioned expressly and by name in *Mausoleum*, the former in the text on the British mathematician Alan Mathison Turing (1912-1954), the latter in that on his compatriot, the engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859); cf. Enzensberger, *Mausoleum* 117 and 75, respectively. As a rule, though,

no names or express references are given in the texts; instead, they have been relegated to the index; and any connections whatsoever must be inferred and supplemented by the critic or reader. This applies, to tender but one example, to the German writer Ricarda Huch (1864-1947) and her book *Michael Bakunin und die Anarchie* of 1923, a source of facts and quotes pertaining to the Russian revolutionary, and used in the long and weighty piece devoted to him; cf. *ibid.* 85f., 122.

39. As can be seen, yet became obvious in Gutenberg's case already, the Enzensberger of *Mausoleum* indulges in a seemingly playful mystification, for this yoking together of bare initials, on the one hand, and, on the other, of exact dates affects the volume in its entirety. It is, however, merely a partial mystification since the full name plus pertinent profession or occupation, activity or general achievement and contribution appear in the index in each and every instance; besides, the apparent playfulness is likewise a partial one insofar as the temporary smack of anonymity it produces serves to underpin the overall anonymousness and ubiquity of the contradictory process the author unfolds and penetrates before our eyes. —For the quotation, cf. *ibid.* 15.

40. Cf. *ibid.* 125.

41. *Ibid.* 71; but compare also *ibid.* 31.

42. The most thorough and energetic attempt at such an investigation has so far, at least to my knowledge, been undertaken by Melin; cf. her *Poetic Maneuvers* 83ff. *et passim*. Melin offers many astute observations and valuable insights, but she does not address our questions directly, much less exclusively. All the same, her monograph should be read and pondered as a very useful and enlightening contribution even though she views both *Mausoleum* and Enzensberger's poetry at large from rather different angles throughout.



43. See Enzensberger, *Mausoleum* 8, 18, 39 (my emphases).

44. Just consider—to adduce but one additional example—Enzensberger's shrewd and biting manipulation, indeed transmogrification, of the proverb “Was ein Häkchen werden will, krümmt sich beizeiten” (its English equivalent being, perhaps, *As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined*). With reference to Machiavelli, the author states peremptorily: “Was ein rechter Renaissancemesch ist, das [sic] krümmt sich beizeiten” (i.e., *a real*—that is, an allegedly proud and upright—*man of the Renaissance cringes in due time*); *ibid.* 13. And so on *ad libitum*.

45. Cf. Karl Krolow, *Aspekte zeitgenössischer Lyrik* (Gütersloh: Mohn, <sup>2</sup>1961) 67f. *et passim*.

46. Cf. Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History—Doctrine* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1955) 162 *et passim*.

47. For the German quotations and citations, compare Enzensberger, *Mausoleum* 30, 42, 84, 85ff., 102ff., 117.

48. Melin, *Poetic Maneuvers* 104; but I hasten to add that this is one of the very few points where I cannot help disagreeing with her.

49. See *A Glossary of German Literary Terms* 33. The reference to Goethe pertains to his “Ballade, Betrachtung und Auslegung” (“The Ballad, Contemplation and Exegesis”) of 1821; cf. *Goethes Werke* I: 400ff. —Also, compare Gero von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* (Stuttgart: Kröner, <sup>7</sup>1989) 73ff.

50. Cf. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Gedichte 1955-1970* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971) 125ff.; *id.*, *Mausoleum* 11ff., espec. 13. Compare also *id.*, *Die Gedichte* 264ff., a mere reprint, albeit with corrections, of the earlier text.

51. Cf. *id.*, *Gedichte 1955-1970* 122f. and *Die Gedichte* 261f.;

id., *Mausoleum* 7f. —But one significant change must be recorded in this instance, too. Namely, we first learn that the origin of the Dondian clock, or machine, is “unbegreiflich” (*incomprehensible*); then, however, we are told that it is merely “problematisch” (*problematical*).

52. Cf. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Blindenschrift* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964) 26f.; id., *Gedichte 1955-1970* 76 and *Die Gedichte* 183; id., *Mausoleum* 36ff. —As for said rhetorical elucidation, compare Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Poems for People Who Don't Read Poems* (New York: Atheneum, 1968) 163 where the author speaks of *a kind of syntax which classical grammar calls apokoinou, and whose sentence parts are related in such a way that the sentence can be read in several different ways.*

53. Cf. Enzensberger, *Kiosk* 19ff.; *German 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry* 299/31. For the poet's self-translation, which is rather different from mine, and even adds dates to the four sections, see Enzensberger, *Kiosk: Poems* 12f.

54. See Theodor Fontane, *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Walter Keitel (Munich: Hanser, 1962ff.) VI: 285ff.; Fontane, drawing on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, establishes a demonic witches' frame and, moreover, prefaces his entire poem with a quote from that play in English. Cf. also Walter Hinck, *Die deutsche Ballade von Bürger bis Brecht: Kritik und Versuch einer Neuorientierung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972) 94ff.

55. Cf. Enzensberger, *Blindenschrift* 60f. and *Die Gedichte* 214f.; id., *Selected Poems* 41/43. Also, compare id., *Leichter als Luft* 14ff. and *Lighter than Air* 11/13 as well as *Die Geschichte der Wolken* 87f.

56. Reinhold Grimm, “Theorie und Praxis des Prosagedichts bei Walter Helmut Fritz,” *Studi germanici*, N.S. XXXVIII (2000): 103-28, espec. 124.

57. For English translations, see, for example, Walter Helmut Fritz, "Magic Hoods [etc.]," *Northwest Review* 40.2 (2002): 60-66; id., "Ten Poems," *Literary Imagination* 5 (2003): 338-47 (the latter bilingual). Also, see id., *Möglichkeiten des Prosagedichts anhand einiger französischer Beispiele* (Wiesbaden: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1970); compare Ulrich Fülleborn, *Das deutsche Prosagedicht: Zu Theorie und Geschichte einer Gattung* (Munich: Fink, 1970) and *Deutsche Prosagedichte des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Textsammlung*. Ed. Ulrich Fülleborn (Munich: Fink, 1976) espec. 15ff.

58. Cf., e.g., the respective bibliographies: first, that of Alfred Estermann in *Hans Magnus Enzensberger*. Ed. Reinhold Grimm (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984) 343-435; second, that of Rainer Wieland in *Der Zorn altert, die Ironie ist unsterblich: Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger*. Ed. Rainer Wieland (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999) 249-341. —By the end of the past century, translations of books by Enzensberger had appeared in well over two dozen languages: to wit, in Bulgarian, Catalan, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Farsi (Persian), Finnish, French, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Macedonian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Rumanian, Swedish, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, and Turkish.

59. Compare, for instance, the brief analyses of Silvia Volckmann and Hiltrud Gnüg in *Geschichte im Gedicht: Texte und Interpretationen. Protestlied, Bänkelsang, Ballade, Chronik*. Ed. Walter Hinck (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979) 283-91 and 295-301, respectively; Roland Innerhofer, "Hans Magnus Enzensbergers *Mausoleum*: Zur 'dokumentarischen' Lyrik in Deutschland" (Diss. Vienna, 1980); Hans Egon Holthusen, *Sartre in Stammheim: Zwei Themen aus den Jahren der großen Turbulenz* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982) 32; Michael Franz, "Hans Magnus Enzensberger: *Mausoleum*," in *Hans Magnus Enzensberger* 294-311 (first published in *Weimarer Beiträge* 22 [1976]). Also, cf. Melin, *Poetic Maneuvers* 103f., 218.

60. And so on and so forth; see *ibid.* xiii, 83, 86f., 101, 158 etc.—However, compare also, among others, Per Øhrgaard, “Carceri d’ invenzione: Über Enzensbergers *Mausoleum*,” *Text und Kontext* 6 (1978): 416-28; Gunther Witting, “Übernahme und Opposition: Zu H. M. Enzensbergers Gattungsinnovationen,” *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* N.F. 31 (1981): 432-61; Jonathan Monroe, *A Poverty of Objects: The Prose Poem and the Politics of Genre* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1987).— It should be noted, though, that Witting, for example, does not offer any overall insights into “Gattungsinnovationen” (*generic innovations*); rather, in spite of his promising title, he discusses just a single text, and hardly the most typical one to boot.

61. See Melin, *Poetic Maneuvers* 104 *et passim* (the expressionist Heym [1887-1912] and the postwar lyricist and storyteller Bobrowski [1917-1965] are, of course, important in their own right, whereas Novak [1935-], here as elsewhere, appears to be overestimated). Isolated forerunners that have been named include, for example, the Czech poet Vítězslav Nezval (1900-1958) with his huge homage to Edison; cf. Franz, “Hans Magnus Enzensberger: *Mausoleum*” 294.

62. Holthusen, *Sartre in Stammheim* 33. For the Bennian poems named or alluded to, see Gottfried Benn, *Gesammelte Werke in vier Bänden*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1958ff.) III: 21 (“Der junge Hebbel”), 239ff. (“—Gewisse Lebensabende”), 188ff. (“Chopin”), 177 (“Turin [I]”), and 465 (“Turin [II]”). Holthusen could have added “Räuber-Schiller,” a poem which portrays the young Friedrich Schiller, author of the once sensational play *Die Räuber* (“The Robbers”) of 1782.

63. Compare, for instance, Volckmann’s comparative interpretation in *Geschichte im Gedicht* (see n. 59 above).

64. Benn, *Gesammelte Werke* III: 113.

65. For typical Bennian poems of such a ‘scientific’ kind, see, among others, “Ostafrika” (“East Africa”), “Pappel” (“Poplar Tree”), “Meer- und Wandersagen” (“Legends of the Sea[s] and of Wandering”), “Theogonien” (“Theogonies”), or “Reisen” (“Traveling”); cf. *ibid.* 42, 66f., 68f., 94f., 327. For the essays mentioned, see Benn, *Gesammelte Werke I*: 140ff., 162ff., 351ff. —Concerning Benn’s influence on Enzensberger, it should also be noted that it comes to the fore in early volumes such as *Verteidigung der Wölfe* in particular, although their author never contemptuously dismissed Benn and his work, as did so many writers of the younger generation. Enzensberger remained loyal to Gottfried Benn; compare, for example, his long poem “Die Frösche von Bikini” (“The Frogs of Bikini”) of 1980, in which he admonishes the iconoclasts:

Laßt mir Herrn Dr. Benn in Ruhe!  
Belle-Alliance-Straße, alle Kassen.  
Seine Patienten jedenfalls  
haben sich nie über ihn beklagt.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Die Furie des Verschwindens: Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980) 37ff.; espec. 46.

66. Compare Melin, *Poetic Maneuvers* 123ff., 153ff. *et passim*.

67. For the Enzensbergerian titles and quotes, see Enzensberger, *Kiosk* 72 and *Kiosk: Poems* 51; *id.*, *Zukunftsmusik* 112 and *Selected Poems* 243; *id.*, *Zukunftsmusik* 26f. —As for the approval of mathematical academia, see Franz, “Hans Magnus Enzensberger: *Mausoleum*” 295f. “In einem Festvortrag zum 275. Jubiläum der Akademie der Wissenschaften [in erstwhile East Berlin] im Sommer 1975 äußerte sich Prof. Dr. Karl Schröter im Zusammenhang mit dem Gödelschen Unvollständigkeitstheorem über den Lyriker Enzensberger: ‘Gödel hat bewiesen, daßes in jeder widerspruchsfreien, hinreichend aus drucksfähigen mathematischen Theorie stets wahre Aussagen gibt, die mit den Hilfsmitteln der betreffenden Theorie

nicht beweisbar sind ... Das Gödelsche Unvollständigkeits- bzw. Unentscheidbarkeitstheorem ist sicher eines der bedeutendsten Ergebnisse der mathematischen Forschung der letzten 50 Jahre überhaupt. Ich habe mit großem Vergnügen festgestellt, daß es in einem Gedicht eines modernen Lyrikers, nämlich in dem Gedicht *Hommage à Gödel* von Hans Magnus Enzensberger ..., vollkommen richtig und in seiner Bedeutung zutreffend wiedergegeben worden ist." The professor was, doubtless, even more delighted when he later on learned that the selfsame modern lyricist had published a veritable and full-fledged monograph on mathematics; cf. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Der Zahlenteufel: Ein Kopfkissenbuch für alle, die Angst vor der Mathematik haben* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1997) and *The Number Devil: A Mathematical Adventure* (New York: Holt, 1998).— The name (Benoît) Mandelbrot—we already know Kurt Gödel—refers to the author of *Les Objets fractals* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975) and other pertinent publications.

68. For the citations and quotations, see Enzensberger, *Kiosk* 41 and *Kiosk: Poems* 27; id., *Kiosk* 125 and *Kiosk: Poems* 85; Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert H. Göpfert (Munich: Hanser, 1958f.) II: 617 and *Wallenstein* and *Mary Stuart*. Ed. Walter Hinderer (New York: Continuum, 1991) 331 (slightly changed); Günter Kunert, *Die Botschaft des Hotelzimmers an den Gast: Aufzeichnungen* (Munich / Vienna: Hanser, 2004) 45.

69. Compare Enzensberger, *Leichter als Luft* 87 and *Lighter than Air* 105 (slightly changed); also, see id., *Die Gedichte* 331.

70. Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations, II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948); the decisive essay "Qu'est-ce que la littérature?" was first published in Sartre's journal *Les Temps Modernes* in 1947.

71. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Einladung zu einem Poesie-Automaten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000) 15 *et passim*. Neither the terms 'chaos' or 'chaos theory' nor terms such as 'attractor,' 'bifurcation' or 'fractal(s)' appear in this slim volume.

72. Compare id., “Carry on Gutenberg! Two Cheers for a Minority,” in *The Situation of High-Quality Literature*. Ed. Sture Allén (Stockholm: Swedish Academy, 1993) 33-46.