

## Staging German-Jewish Exile in Else Lasker-Schüler's *IchundIch*

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Of the various literary practices produced in exile from National Socialist Germany, theatre confronted perhaps the greatest challenge. To be sure, plays continued to be written and performed in exile by renowned Weimar-era playwrights and producers such as Bertolt Brecht, Erwin Piscator, Max Reinhardt and Georg Kaiser, and ensembles of exiled actors toured Europe performing German plays in front of German-speaking audiences.<sup>1</sup> But the very notion of performing a play in front of an audience that was no longer part of the playwright's community (whether it was in Los Angeles, Moscow, Paris, or Jerusalem) brought to the foreground the necessary relationship between a drama and the audience for which it was intended. In this context, theatre, as Jost Hermand has recently suggested, was more bound to its place of origin and to the social and economic circumstances that gave rise to its production than were prose and poetry.<sup>2</sup> When the playwright lost her land and language, she lost much of what made the dramatic enterprise possible. Critics have further argued that works produced in exile suffered aesthetically because of the absence of the supportive infrastructure that was so crucial to the artist's productivity, but this argument presupposes that such work is to be evaluated according to aesthetic criteria that had not taken this distinct existential condition into account.<sup>3</sup> What would

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the history of specifically Jewish drama, cabaret, music and opera under the Third Reich, see Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb (eds.), *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust: Texts, Documents, Memoirs*, Baltimore 1999.

<sup>2</sup> See Jost Hermand, *Culture in Dark Times: Nazi Fascism, Inner Emigration, and Exile*, New York and Oxford 2013, pp. 220-224.

<sup>3</sup> Exile literature in the German context is a widely documented topic, but for a relatively recent examination of this discourse, see [Bettina] Englmann, *Poetik des Exils: Die Modernität der deutschsprachigen Exilliteratur*, Tübingen 2001; and Franz Norbert Mennemeier and Frithjop Trapp, *Deutsche Exildramatik 1933-1950*, Munich 1980, p. 25.

an artwork then look like that was not only produced in exile, but formally accounted for its conditions? Could there be something like exilic drama or exilic theatre?<sup>4</sup>

Such a predicament encountered a singular response in the work of the German-Jewish poet and playwright Else Lasker-Schüler (1869-1945), specifically in her third and final drama, *IchundIch: eine theatralische Tragödie*.<sup>5</sup> Lasker-Schüler may have conceived of the central motif of the drama as early as 1931, when she wrote her “last great essay on German soil,” “Das Gebet,” which thematizes a divinely inspired division within the human being who wishes to “find herself again.”<sup>6</sup> Yet it was only after being denied re-entry into Switzerland in 1939 and subsequently condemned to permanent exile in Palestine (after two previous stints there in 1934 and 1937) that she came to *IchundIch*. Lasker-Schüler wrote the drama during the winter of 1940-1941, keenly aware of the catastrophe unfolding in Europe. She performed its first full reading in July 1941 at the Berger Club in Jerusalem, in front of an audience comprised of such luminaries as Martin Buber and Ernst Simon.<sup>7</sup> Early readers and viewers—most notably Lasker-Schüler’s friend and critic, Ernst Ginsberg—found the drama nearly incomprehensible, even

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<sup>4</sup> I am loosely adapting this term from Yana Meerzon’s ‘Introduction: On Theater and Exile: Toward a Definition of Exilic Theater as Performing Odyssey’, in *Performing Exile, Performing Self: Drama, Theater, Film*, New York 2012, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Lasker-Schüler’s first play, *Die Wupper*—an Expressionist drama that thematizes social and religious tensions in Wuppertal, the author’s childhood home—was published in 1909, but did not premiere until 1919 at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. She wrote her second play, *Arthur Aronymus und seine Väter*, which addresses the possibility of a reconciliation between German Jewry and German Christendom, in 1932, the same year she received the Kleistpreis along with Richard Billinger, and a year before she left Berlin for Zurich. This play premiered at the Schauspielhaus Zürich in 1936. While all three of Lasker-Schüler’s dramas incorporate elements of the author’s childhood and general biography, neither of them is as formally experimental (or as politically charged) as *IchundIch*. For more on the performance history of these first two dramas, including the disastrous Swiss production of *Arthur*, see Sigrid Bauschinger, *Else Lasker-Schüler: Biographie*, Göttingen 2004, pp. 141-146, 387-394.

<sup>6</sup> Bauschinger writes that amidst the tumultuous events in Germany of the early 1930s “schrieb Else Lasker-Schüler ihren letzten großen Essay auf deutschem Boden, ‘Das Gebet’. Darin schottet sie sich völlig von der sie umgebenden Gehässigkeit ab und findet zum ersten Mal zu der Vorstellung, die ihrem letzten Drama, *IchundIch*, zugrunde liegen wird: dem von Gott in zwei Hälften geteilten Menschen, der sich ‘wiederfinden’ will.” See Bauschinger, p. 329.

<sup>7</sup> For more on Lasker-Schüler’s relationship to Ernst Simon during these last years, see Bauschinger, pp. 425-436.

attributing its unconventional aesthetics and alleged poetic incoherence to the onset of senility.<sup>8</sup> It was not until decades later that Margarete Kupper effectively rediscovered the drama, writing its first afterword; the first production of *IchundIch* in Germany was in 1979 under the direction of Michael Gruner.<sup>9</sup> The drama has been recently discussed in the context of Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* and Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be* as one of the most significant satires of National Socialism produced during the regime's reign.<sup>10</sup>

*IchundIch*, which was initially intended to serve as the centerpiece of a second "Palästina-Buch," consists primarily of a play within a play written by the exiled poetess and directed by the likewise exiled Austrian-Jewish playwright, Max Reinhardt.<sup>11</sup> Part grotesque parody of the rhetorical gestures of National Socialism and classical German culture alike, and part staged theodicy, the drama opens with a prelude that presents the poet walking through the streets of Jerusalem in the early 1940s, telling her theatre companion that the events about to transpire took place ten and a half years ago, "in the godforsaken Nazi city."<sup>12</sup> The first five acts take place in hell (near the Tower of David, the fictional "Hell Ground")<sup>13</sup>; in the sixth act we

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<sup>8</sup> Bauschinger, p. 425.

<sup>9</sup> Ginsberg wrote to Lasker-Schüler's friend and critic Werner Kraft: "Denn dieses Drama ist doch der Spiegel der jammervollsten Zerstörung und Auflösung," further requesting of Kraft "im Interesse des Angedenkens und des unzerstörten Bildes der Lasker von einer Veröffentlichung dieses Stückes abzusehen. Ich habe nur mit tiefster Erschütterung, ja ich gestehe: zuweilen nur unter Tränen lesen können." Quoted in Kevin Vennemann, "Nachwort," in *IchundIch*, Frankfurt 2009, pp. 98-99. Ginsberg and Kraft were involved in a protracted and politically charged controversy in Germany surrounding the publication of *IchundIch*. In short, there were virtually no publishers willing to publish the text in its entirety (which Kraft wanted, though Ginsberg opposed) until 1970, the year of its first full publication. For more on the controversy surrounding this text's initial reception, see Jakob Hessing, *Die Heimkehr einer jüdischen Emigrantin: Else Lasker-Schülers mythisierende Rezeption 1945-1971*, Tübingen 1993, pp. 49-58.

<sup>10</sup> Vennemann, p. 93.

<sup>11</sup> Lasker-Schüler's first "Palästina-Buch," *Das Hebräerland*, is a poetic prose piece on her ambulatory experiences in Jerusalem during her first stay there in 1934. It was published as a book in Zürich in 1937. The intended second "Palästina-Buch," to be titled either "Tiberias" or "Die heilige Stadt," never came to fruition. See Bauschinger, p. 442.

<sup>12</sup> Lasker-Schüler, *Else. Three Plays: Dark River, Arthur Aronymous and his Ancestors, and I and I*. Inca Molina Rumold (ed.), Jane Curtis (trans.), Evanston 2005, p. 222. In the original: "in der gottverlassenen Nacistadt" (the use of "c" might be intentionally satirical). Lasker-Schüler, *IchundIch*, in *Werke und Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe – Band 2: Dramen*, Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 185.

<sup>13</sup> "Höllengrund." *Dramen*, p. 187.

return to Jerusalem, specifically to the Eden-like garden of an ophthalmologist, where the poet—both the writer of the play within the play and a character in Lasker-Schüler’s play—dies peacefully. The cast is comprised of historical personalities drawn from the contemporary German, American, and Palestinian landscapes (including Hitler, Goebbels, Göring, Max Reinhardt, The Ritz Brothers, and the Jerusalem-based journalist Gershon Swet); fictional characters from Goethe’s *Faust* (Faust, Mephisto, a flirtatious Marthe Schwerdtlein); biblical figures (the Baal and Kings Saul, David and Solomon); and finally, the audience, the critics, some dancing devils, and, eventually, a scarecrow. The poet often interrupts her own creation, speaking to the multiple audiences both present and absent, and her sundered ego lends the drama its title, though many such divisions inform the drama’s composition. As the play within the play’s central interlocutors, Faust and Mephisto maintain a running dialogue in which they ruminate on both current events and the meaning of eternity, while looming in the background is the attempt by the National Socialists to conquer hell after having already taken over the world, only to suffer defeat at the hands of Mephisto. Far from representing a purely evil being, Mephisto becomes god-like in the end, which would explain why Lasker-Schüler was originally going to name the drama “Der bekehrte Satan.”<sup>14</sup>

Given that the experience of exile is so central to my reading of the play, it is worth briefly recapitulating recent theoretical explorations of the many valences of this term. Elisabeth Bronfen has advocated a notion of exile that transcends the historical condition, defining it additionally as a trans-epochal poetic disposition expressed through the language of a given text. Exile functions for Bronfen as a heuristic for textual analysis that can be decoded through recourse to the author’s biography or through a close reading of a given work.<sup>15</sup> An exilic work

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<sup>14</sup> Bauschinger, p. 419.

<sup>15</sup> See Bronfen, ‘Exil in der Literatur: Zwischen Metapher und Realität’, in *Arcadia*, 28, no. 2 (1993), pp. 167-183.

may or may not have been produced in actual exile, but it must somehow invoke this condition through its formal features. Enzo Traverso has recently written of the “epistemological privilege of exile,” specifically in the context of National Socialist Germany, suggesting that German-Jewish exiles were, in a certain sense, compensated for the “privations and uprooted life in exile” they suffered by honing an intellectual perspective denied to those who never left Germany or Austria.<sup>16</sup> Edward’s Said’s “Reflections on Exile” explicitly reminds his readers that with this phenomenon comes terror, alienation, and devastating loss, and he distinguishes the exile from the “refugee,” the “expatriate,” and the “émigré.” Exile stands, for Said, in dialectical relation to nationalism, insofar as the exile knows that “homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity.”<sup>17</sup> While we cannot empirically measure the effects of exile on a particular writer, Bronfen, Traverso and Said all point to a necessary relationship between exile and the intellectual or artistic work produced under its auspices.

In the context of the drama in question, it is important to note that Lasker-Schüler’s relationship to Palestine could best be described as ambivalent, Alfred Bodenheimer having described Jerusalem as her “imposed homeland.” Longing for a real home, her childhood, her mother, and an end to the “world’s decay,”<sup>18</sup> Lasker-Schüler never entirely accepted Jerusalem as

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<sup>16</sup> Traverso, Enzo. ‘To Brush against the Grain: The Holocaust and German-Jewish Exile’, in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 5, no. 2 (August 2004), p. 243. One (albeit broad) example Traverso gives of this phenomenon is his suggestion that German-Jewish exiles developed the more theoretical branches of Marxism while living abroad (Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, Isaac Deutscher, etc.), as opposed to those who clung to more orthodox strains of communism at home. See Traverso, p. 261.

<sup>17</sup> Aside from anointing Theodor Adorno as the modern exile thinker par excellence, Said also, of course, discusses the problematic of Jewish and Palestinian exile, which is of great relevance to Lasker-Schüler’s own experience in Jerusalem. See Said, ‘Reflections on Exile,’ in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 173-186.

<sup>18</sup> This is taken from the titular poem to Lasker-Schüler’s last collection, *Mein blaues Klavier* (1943), most of which she composed while living in Switzerland. See Audri Durchslag-Litt and Jeanette Litman-Demeestère, *Selected Poems*, Copenhagen and Los Angeles 2002, p. 229. The first two verses of the original poem read: “Ich habe zu Hause ein blaues Klavier / Und kenne doch keine Note. / Es steht im Dunkel der Kellertür, / Seitdem die Welt

her final resting point, let alone an end to her exilic existence, as many wished for it to be.<sup>19</sup> Thus like the characters and the various subplots that parade on stage, Jerusalem functions in the drama more as a floating signifier or product of the literary imagination than a fixed historical background against which the action takes place.<sup>20</sup> Both time and space are transformed and transfigured in the drama, which engages in constant dialogue with other “precursor texts” and historical discourses repurposed for new aesthetic and political ends.<sup>21</sup> By decoding a few key scenes and configurations, I will argue that *Ich und Ich* stages the fraught historical trajectory of German-Jewish exile without undermining or aestheticizing the gravity of this historical experience. Through recourse to a series of what the author calls “book-related” affinities (an important phrase to which I will later return), the drama reflects on both the highly contested terrain of the German literary tradition as well as the mutual implication of German and German-Jewish culture—in spite, or perhaps because of the historical circumstances that occasioned its production.

### “ONLY ETERNITY IS NOT EXILE”

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verrohte.” See Lasker-Schüler, *Werke und Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe – Band 1.1: Gedichte*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 284.

<sup>19</sup> Quote in the original: “Auferlegte Heimat.” Bodenheimer argues: “Das Spannungsverhältnis, in welches sie die Konfrontation mit dem Land permanent versetzte, war kein sozial oder politisch begründetes; es resultierte zum einen aus dem Konflikt zwischen ihren Empfindungen von Heimat gegenüber Palästina und der Unfreiwilligkeit des Dortseins, der ihr Leben als Emigrantin prägte, noch viel starker aber aus der wachsenden Diskrepanz zwischen der dem Land zugeschriebenen und durch den Wiederaufbau sich anscheinend manifestierenden Erlösungskraft und der Katastrophe, welche dessenungeachtet immer brutaler über die europäischen Juden hereinbrach und damit auch Else Lasker-Schülers eigene Vergangenheit zuschüttelte.” See Bodenheimer, *Die auferlegte Heimat: Else Lasker-Schülers Emigration in Palästina*, Tübingen 1995, pp. 17-18.

<sup>20</sup> For more on Lasker-Schüler’s wildly imaginative characters and their “reterritorializing” effects, see Jonathan Skolnik, *Jewish Pasts, German Fictions: History, Memory, and Minority Culture in Germany, 1824-1955*, Stanford 2013, pp. 105-146.

<sup>21</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, Chicago 2000, p. 16. For the most comprehensive (if highly deconstructive) reading of the drama to date, see Andrea Krauß, *Zerbrechende Tradierung: Zu Kontexten des Schauspiels “Ich und Ich” von Else Lasker-Schüler*, Vienna 2002. See also Heinz Thiel, “‘Ich und Ich’ – ein versperrtes Werk?,” in Michael Schmid Hammer (ed.), *Lasker-Schüler: Ein Buch zum 100. Geburtstag der Dichterin*, Wuppertal 1969, pp. 123-159.

Upon entering the theatre of her “Hell play in the parquet”<sup>22</sup> with her companion at the end of the prologue, the poet whistles the tune to a nineteenth-century Swabian *Volkslied*, ushering in the play within the play: “Muß i denn muß i denn zum Städtli hinaus, Städtli hinaus – und du, mein Schatz, bleibst hier.”<sup>23</sup> The song is not incidentally about a soldier’s promise to remain faithful to his lover as he departs for war, establishing an analogy between the play about to unfold and the war (presumably, the Second World War) invoked in it, and hinting at the possibility of not ever returning. Through this song, the exiled poet is brought into contact with an earlier moment in German popular culture, initiating what will become a recurring phenomenon throughout the drama.<sup>24</sup> The tune conjures up multiple scenes of displacement: for the poet as a character in the drama, who finds herself wandering the foreign streets of Jerusalem, but also for her role as the play within the play’s creator, who, in the first act, claims to be leaving eternity and entering the world, “at home for the weekend” (p. 224).<sup>25</sup> The divisions between the play and play within the play, home and abroad, and world and eternity, are subsequently mirrored in the split subjectivity of the poet, who announces:<sup>26</sup>

Hear, Audience, the murder tale  
That I wrote for myself in darkest night!  
And since the tale I tell is true,  
Banish every doubt:  
What you see is not an apparition,  
For I divided myself into two halves shortly before dawn,  
Into two parts: I and I!<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis, p. 223. Quote in the original: “Und lausch vor meiner Herzensbühne im Parquet dem Höllenspiel.” *Dramen*, p. 186.

<sup>23</sup> Lasker-Schüler, *Ibid* (Curtis uses the German). This *Volkslied* was a traditional soldier’s song of departure from the nineteenth century that has been attributed to Friedrich Silcher. See Vennemann, p. 79.

<sup>24</sup> This song was also made popular during the Weimar period by the famous men’s ensemble, the Comedian Harmonists.

<sup>25</sup> The original is in English—English, Hebrew, and French phrases pepper the dialogue from beginning to end.

<sup>26</sup> Much of Lasker-Schüler’s poetry that she composed around this time also addresses, in one way or another, the sense of self-estrangement and exile that is foregrounded in her literary counterpart in *IchundIch*. See, for example, the poems “Hingabe” and “So lange es ist her,” in Lasker-Schüler, *Werke 2*, Frankfurt 1996, p. 349, p. 360.

<sup>27</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis. P. 225. In the original:  
“Höret, Publikum, die Mordgeschichte –  
Die ich an mir in finsterner Nacht vollbracht!

The poet's division into two parts establishes the drama's first thematic link to Goethe's Faust, who famously bears two souls "in one breast."<sup>28</sup> Yet the poet's story must be understood in the context of the "gloomy night" of which she speaks: the onset of the Third Reich. In a bold act of usurpation, the explicitly female, Jewish poet has thus replaced the male and ostensibly most Germanic of all literary creations, subverting the National Socialist appropriation of Faust for its cynical political ends.<sup>29</sup> We are not reading simply a parody or revision of an ostensibly original text, but an active *rewriting* of it.

Anticipating Faust's appearance in the play, the poet also inserts herself into a dialogue on the role of the female Jewish writer within German literature since the late seventeenth century, and more broadly, on the relationship between German and Jewish culture as such.<sup>30</sup> These overlapping discourses are foregrounded when, early in the first act, the poet utters the name of the figure to whom she is devoting her play: "Attention! / To my mother, these lines, / The devotee of Goethe: she is / the godmother of my two halves."<sup>31</sup> The reference to the poet's mother suggests two things. On a purely biographical level, it indexes the singular role that Lasker-Schüler's mother played throughout her life, as a literary muse among other forms of

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Und da die Wahrheit ich berichte,  
wenn ich dichte,  
Laßt allen Zweifel außer Acht!  
Es handelt sich nicht etwa um - Gesichte,  
Da ich mich teilte in zwei Hälften kurz vor Tageslichte,

In zwei Teile: IchundIch!" *Dramen*, 188. The English translation does not retain the doggerel from the original.

<sup>28</sup> "Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust." See Goethe, *Faust: Der Tragödie Erster Teil*, Stuttgart 2000, p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> For more on the National Socialist appropriation of *Faust*, see Krauß, pp. 173-192, and Martin Swales, 'Theatre, meta-theatre, tragedy', in *Goethe's Faust: Theatre of Modernity*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 197-208. Gender in Lasker-Schüler is a large discourse, too large to be given its proper due in this context. For recent work on performing gender in Lasker-Schüler, see Andrew Webber, 'Inside Out: Acts of Displacement in Else Lasker-Schüler', *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*, 81, issue 2 (2006), pp. 143-160.

<sup>30</sup> For a study on the role of German-Jewish women writers since the late seventeenth century, see Dagmar Lorenz, *Keepers of the Motherland: German Texts by Jewish Women Writers*, Nebraska 1997. For a broader study of the role of the Jewish writer within German culture, see Ritchie Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature, 1749-1939: Emancipation and its Discontents*, Oxford 1999.

<sup>31</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis. Quote in the original: "An meine teure Mutter <Stern> diese Zeile: / Der Goethehochverehrerin: sie ist / die Pathin meiner beiden Hälftenteile." *Dramen*, p. 188.



inspiration. Many of the poet's late poems address her mother in various ways.<sup>32</sup> Yet equally as important is how the poet's mother also stands in as a metonymy for assimilated German-Jewry's celebration of the classical German poet, a cultural gesture that effectively symbolized its sense of belonging to the German bourgeoisie, or *Bildungsbürgertum*. Lasker-Schüler's mother was, indeed, the figure who first introduced her young daughter to Goethe, Schiller, and Heine, among others.<sup>33</sup> With this dedication the poet suggests that only now, under National Socialist rule, has this cultural nexus been rendered a bygone and perhaps irretrievable moment.<sup>34</sup> What I would refer to as the poet's exile from herself can thus be seen as both an existential as well as a historically determined crisis.

Faust soon appears in the opening act, lamenting that the first and second part of "his" drama has been burned in Weimar "once and for all,"<sup>35</sup> an unambiguous reference to the National Socialist book burning of 1933. Mephisto responds: "No reason to brood about it, Doctor Faust; the Testament written by *God* was also burned, the first part of the Bible and the second part as well."<sup>36</sup> In other words, Mephisto assures Faust that these two pillars of Western culture, the Judeo-Christian Bible and Goethe's *Faust* (a secular bible of sorts), have been destroyed in this act of violence. Whatever Goethe and the Bible had once represented, the National Socialists have negated, literally and symbolically. Goethe's *Faust*, too, has been orphaned, or exiled from its authorial origins, and thus we find some of its central characters roaming through the confines

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<sup>32</sup> The motifs of death, homesickness, and Lasker-Schüler's mother permeate *Mein blaues Klavier* (1943). One poem, "Meine Mutter," begins: "Es brennt die Kerze auf meinem Tisch / Für meine Mutter die ganze Nacht - / Für meine Mutter . . . .". See Lasker-Schüler, *Gedichte*, p. 282.

<sup>33</sup> For more on Lasker-Schüler's relationship to her mother, including the influence she would have on her daughter's predilection for German literature and Jewish culture, see Bauschinger, pp. 19-22.

<sup>34</sup> For recent work on the role of Goethe within the German-Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum*, see Klaus Berghahn and Jost Hermann (eds.), *Goethe in German-Jewish Culture*, Rochester 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis, p. 227. Quote in the original: "ein für alle Mal." *Dramen*, 190.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* Quote in the original: "Kein Grund zum Grübeln, Doktor Faust, das Testament von 'Gott' geschrieben, brannte ebenfalls der erste und der zweite Teil der Bibeln." *Dramen*, p. 190. *IchundIch* combines doggerel, prose and verse, which amounts to an unsettling audible effect when performed aloud.

of hell along with figures from the Bible. These figures are all living together in exile, posing an implicit challenge to the authority of various texts and traditions.

Not only, however, do the characters find themselves in alien environments; scenes and dialogic exchanges are estranged from their supposed origins as well.<sup>37</sup> Faust and Mephisto, for example, begin in Act I to wax theological about the origins of human nature and Faust's illicit affair with Gretchen before being interrupted by their director, Max Reinhardt:

MEPHISTO: I feel your heart's distress and blush with you on the cheek of your heart, [cajoling] like the young virgin from Anno 80, I'm starting to blush for shame with you, Heinrich...  
 FAUST: Is Satan alluding somewhat indelicately to Margarete?  
 MEPHISTO [*dissembling*]: Your error, Faust, embarrasses me—  
 FAUST: [*aside, to himself*]: My God, I didn't resist temptation.  
 [MARTHE SCHWERDTLEIN *enters*]  
 MEPHISTO [*turns his back to Faust*]: I'd like to spit into his holy face! Frau Marthe Schwerdtlein, read us my entry under F.  
 MAX REINHARDT: *Attention!* Mephisto, repeat the last lines again with much more contempt: I'd like to spit in his holy face! etc.<sup>38</sup>

When Mephisto shows himself unable to play the part, Reinhardt interrupts once again, this time demanding that the German actor Karl Hannemann—who had played Mephisto in a Weimar-era production of *Faust*—assume the role.<sup>39</sup> With fictional and historical landscapes colliding, the exiled Austrian-Jewish playwright summoned from Los Angeles to Jerusalem to direct this play disrupts a dialogue between Faust and Mephisto that began well before Reinhardt's time. Adding

<sup>37</sup> In this sense, *Ich und Ich* not only contains resonances with the nineteenth-century Romantic dramas (specifically Tieck's *Die verkehrte Welt* and its play within a play structure) and Brechtian epic theatre, but also anticipates Beckett's post-war theatre of the absurd. For more on the avant-gardism of Lasker-Schüler's work, see Markus Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler: Avantgardismus und Kunstinszenierung*, Tübingen 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis, p. 229. In the original:

“MEPHISTO: Ich fühle deine Herzensnot und werde mit dir auf der Wange deines Herzens rot. (schmeichelnd) wie das Jungfräulein anno 80 beginn ich schämig mit dir, Heinrich, zu erröten . . .

FAUST: Spielt Satan, etwa unzart an auf Margarete?

MEPHISTO: (*lügnerisch*) Dein Irrtum Faust stimmt mich betreten –

FAUST: (*zur Seite für sich*) Mein Gott, ich trotze der Versuchung nicht. / (*Fraue Marthe Schwerdtlein tritt in den Raum*)

MEPHISTO (*wendet Faust den Rücken*): Ich möcht ihm speien ins heilige Angesicht!...

DIREKTOR REINHARDT: Attention!! Mephisto, Wiederholen Sie noch einmal die letzten Textreihen betont verächtlicher: Ich möcht ihm speien ins heilige Angesicht! etc.” *Dramen*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>39</sup> Karl Hannemann (1895-1953) was a popular theatre actor in Berlin. He was also part of Lasker-Schüler's circle of friends while she was living in Berlin, one to whom she even devoted an entire poem, “Der Hannemann.” See *Gedichte*, pp. 229-230. For more on Hannemann and Lasker-Schüler, see Vennemann, p. 82, and Bauschinger, pp. 325 and 355.

to this discursive *mélange* is the fact that the last play the historical Reinhardt directed for the Salzburg Festival before emigrating to the United States in 1937 was, indeed, Goethe's *Faust*.<sup>40</sup> The historical circumstances informing this scene and Reinhardt's role in it do not enter the drama as innocuous background, but rather interrupt its very continuity, upending all authorial hierarchy and stability. Faust and Mephisto have ceased to be exclusively part of Goethe's domain, now being directed by Reinhardt via Lasker-Schüler (the dramaturge in the drama) via Lasker-Schüler (the historical poet).

This textual phenomenon is perhaps most salient, however, in the drama's use of quotation and intertextuality. As Faust sinks to his knee after being reminded by Mephisto that he (Mephisto) is his "own" devil,<sup>41</sup> the ever-melancholic Faust lyrically laments:

There is a weeping in the world,  
As though the Dear God had passed away,  
And the leaden gray shadow that falls unfurled  
Weighs like graveyard clay. ...<sup>42</sup>

While this verse and those that follow would appear to be fitting given the historical background, Faust is actually reciting an early poem by Lasker-Schüler entitled "Weltende" published in her second compendium of poetry, *Der siebente Tag* (1905).<sup>43</sup> If the poet/Lasker-Schüler had thus earlier appropriated a Faustian dimension for her own persona, through the ventriloquism above, Faust performs the reverse action by incorporating the words of the poet into his own speech. Perhaps challenging the antisemitic trope of the Jewish "imitation" of German culture, such a

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<sup>40</sup> For more on Reinhardt and the Jewish overtones of the Salzburg Festival, see Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars*, Oxford 2012, pp. 141-171.

<sup>41</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis, p. 230. Quote in the original: "'eigener' Teufel." *Dramen*, p. 192.

<sup>42</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis, p. 231. Quote in the original:

"Es ist ein Weinen in der Welt –  
Als ob der Liebe Gott gestorben wär –  
Und der bleierne Schatten der niederfällt,  
Lastet grabesschwer." *Dramen*, p. 193.

<sup>43</sup> *Der siebente Tag* (*The Seventh Day*) was initially published with the *Verlag des Vereins der Kunst* in 1905.

scene also suggests how each figure is reflected and refracted through the other.<sup>44</sup> We are thus presented with a dialectical moment insofar as an element of classical German culture is reenacted and perpetuated through a kind of rupture and reinvention of this very “shattered tradition.”<sup>45</sup> If in exile, one’s own language is no longer the language spoken by the surrounding or host community, here, by comparison, Faust’s words no longer belong exclusively to Goethe.<sup>46</sup> And yet this exile from the renowned author of *Faust* (despite Mephisto’s repeated conflation of Faust and Goethe) further signifies a newly acquired identification with the exiled community, which includes Lasker-Schüler, who has effectively inserted her words into the supposed origins of this modern tradition.<sup>47</sup> Faust takes on a new valence when he utters the words of Lasker-Schüler, an author officially banned from further participation in the production of German culture. He finds Lasker-Schüler (and vice versa) in their shared lament and in their shared claim to a literary language yet untarnished by the recent events.

The relationship between quotation and exile is made most explicit, however, in Act IV, when Mephisto mockingly recites Goethe’s “Wanderer’s Nightsong,” attributing it to the young “Faust” in one of his several conflations of author and work, a gesture that the play otherwise dismantles.<sup>48</sup> Faust responds to this mockery by singing “My emperor, my emperor’s in chains!”, a not innocuous excerpt from Heinrich Heine’s early poem, *The Grenadiers* (1819), which

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<sup>44</sup> For a recent and thorough analysis of the antisemitic trope of Jewish “imitation,” see Paul Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist: Karl Kraus and Jewish Self-Fashioning in Fin-de-Siecle Europe*, Chicago 2008, pp. 31-68.

<sup>45</sup> This is my interpretation of Krauß’s term “shattering tradition” (*zerbrechende Tradierung*). See Krauß, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Such a gesture also reminds the audience/reader that Faust existed well before Goethe, too.

<sup>47</sup> Moments like these could be conceived of further as moments of “reterritorialization” in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari mean it, and which is then appropriated by Skolnik for his own reading of Lasker-Schüler. See Skolnik, p. 146.

<sup>48</sup> In another example of how references circulate in this text, Mephisto inserts the words “kiwitt, kiwitt, kiwitt” into Goethe’s famous poem, which references the Brother’s Grimm’s fairytale, “Von dem Machandelboom.” See Vennemann, p. 86. This fairytale, in turn, has also been rendered “Vom Wacholderbaum,” since *Machandelboom* and *Wacholderbaum* mean the same thing (Juniper tree), and the poet refers to Mephisto in *IchundIch* as “Wacholderkarl” (*Dramen*, p. 194), clearly alluding to the poem/fairytale Mephisto recites, but also to the actor that is supposed to be playing Mephisto, Karl Hannemann, whom Lasker-Schüler refers to as Wacholderkarl in her poem “Der Hannemann.” See *Gedichte*, p. 229. Finally, Goethe took a song from the fairytale and reworked it for *Faust*. For more on the circulatory uses of these “foundational texts,” see Krauß, p. 160.

describes Napoleon's capture and his soldiers' unyielding loyalty to their emperor, even after their death.<sup>49</sup> The resonance with the contemporary political situation is clear when considering the glaring contrast between the heroic Napoleon, who once led his army into battle himself, and Hitler, who did not.<sup>50</sup> But Faust is also invoking Heine, who was not only the first widely celebrated German-Jewish poet, but was also one of the first prominent exiles from Germany who wrote from abroad (France) and one of Lasker-Schüler's most beloved writers. Hovering in the background is of course Heine's oft-quoted line, "where books are burned, they'll end up burning people, too," thus retrospectively linking Heine to the earlier dialogue between Faust and Mephisto and rendering him a specter haunting various scenes in the drama—Heine's works, too, were destroyed by the Nazis.<sup>51</sup> In this dialectical image, in which exilic figures past and present are once again brought together (Faust/Lasker-Schüler has become Faust/Heine), the borders between German and German-Jewish culture are highly permeable, if existent at all. Adding yet another layer of intertextuality, Reinhardt interrupts his actors and demands that Faust/Heine, who is played by the contemporary German actor (and friend of Lasker-Schüler's) Aribert Wäscher, repeat his lines with "with more shocked anger: 'my emperor, my emperor in chains!!'"<sup>52</sup> Perhaps Reinhardt intervenes to remind his actors of the threat that lingers in the

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<sup>49</sup> Heinrich Heine, trans. by Aaron Kramer, in "The Two Grenadiers," in *The Poetry of Heinrich Heine*, Secaucus 1969, p. 61. Both the original and Curtis's translation have Faust singing the German original, "Mein Kaiser, Mein Kaiser gefangen." Curtis, p. 249; Lasker-Schüler, *Dramen*, p. 210.

<sup>50</sup> Lasker-Schüler's mother furthermore told stories of Napoleon's battles to her daughter, who also saw her mother as Napoleon-like in certain ways. See Bauschinger, pp. 17-20. Napoleon's appearance in this drama could thus be read as another displaced reference to Jeanette Schüler.

<sup>51</sup> The translation of this line, from Heine's play *Almansor* (1823), is Jonathan Skolnik's. See Skolnik, p. 147. For more on Lasker-Schüler's relationship to Heine, and specifically on the connection between Heine's *Der Rabbi von Bacherach* and her *Der Wunderrabbiner von Barcelona*, see Bauschinger, p. 270, and Skolnik, pp. 105-146. Much work has been done on Heine's role within nineteenth- and twentieth-century German-Jewish culture. For recent studies, see Jeffrey Grossmann, 'Auerbach, Heine, and the Question of Bildung in German and German-Jewish Culture', in *Nexus: Essays in German Jewish Studies*, vol. 1, Rochester 2011, pp. 85-108; and Ritchie Robertson, *Heine*, London 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis (slightly modified), p. 249 Quote in the original: "etwas empörter: mein Kaiser mein Kaiser gefangen!!" *Dramen*, p. 210. Aribert Wäscher was another Berlin-based actor friend of Lasker-Schüler. Her eponymous poem dedicated to the actor portrays him as a young Peter in *Die Passion*, and suggests

background. And when Mephisto ultimately drowns the Hitler and his cronies in a mass of molten lava—imitating “the creator” by invoking the parting of the Red Sea, the primal scene of Jewish exile<sup>53</sup>—he provides a climax to this sequence of allusions. *IchundIch* thus shows itself to be most subversive not by satirizing National Socialist ideology (which it does, but which one also finds in other works of exile), but by rewriting a German and German-Jewish cultural dialogue that has been suppressed by such ideology.<sup>54</sup> In spite of the imminent and existential threat posed by this regime, the poet, as I alluded to earlier, explicitly affirms “book-related” rather than “blood-related” affinities (p. 222).<sup>55</sup> Through such affinities exile emerges as a literary practice.

It is also in the climactic fourth act that Faust and Mephisto turn to the subject of exile, one of the few times the phenomenon is actually mentioned by name. The two are playing chess against the faint sound of National Socialists marching in the background. Faust inquires about the “rowdy from Braunau”:<sup>56</sup>

MEPHISTO: God is on watch, friend, and [*boasting*] Satan is awake! We won't let ourselves be bothered [*ironically*] by cousin Adolf here in our chess game.  
 FAUST. That, Your Highness, you have now from this son of Earth!  
 MEPHISTO. He speculates on my throne. But my hand's in the game, just my one passion here in exile.  
 FAUST. Your Hell exile for you?  
 MEPHISTO. Only eternity is not exile. To find your way to it, Heinrich, you roamed—not always virtuously, but always unsullied—through the vale of Earth: the land of—sins.<sup>57</sup>

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that the two had conversations about religion with one another. See *Gedichte*, pp. 220-221, and Bauschinger, pp. 325-326.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 253. In the original: “den Schöpfer nachahmend.” *Dramen*, p. 214.

<sup>54</sup> For a study of the comedies and satires of National Socialism written in exile by figures such as Bertolt Brecht, Georg Kaiser, Elias Canetti, and Franz Werfel, see Bernhard Spies, *Die Komödie in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des Exils: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Theorie des komischen Dramas im 20. Jahrhundert*, Würzburg 1997.

<sup>55</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis, p. 222. In the original: “buchverwandt.” *Dramen*, p. 185. The poet uses the term “buchverwandt” in the Prelude presumably undermining the racialist ideology of the term “blutverwandt.”

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 247. In the original: “Störenfried aus Braunau.” *Dramen*, p. 208.

<sup>57</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis (slightly modified), pp. 247-248. Quote in the original:  
 “MEPHISTO: Gott ist der Wache, Freund, und Satanas (prahlerischer) ist wach! Wir lassen uns nicht stören (ironisch) vom Vetter Adolf hier im Schach.  
 FAUST: Das habt Ihr, Hoheit, nun von diesem Erdensohn!  
 MEPHISTO: Er spekuliert auf meinen Thron. Doch meine Hand im Spiel, just meine einzige Passion hier im Exil.  
 FAUST: Euch Eure Hölle ein Exil?

Recasting one of the great Faustian themes, Mephisto, in contrast, on the one hand, suggests that Faust will only find his way (back) home—beyond exile—in eternity, possibly alluding to one of the “two souls” in Faust’s breast: that which longs for the cessation of desire, a wish that can only be granted after death. Mephisto’s own banishment from heaven serves as another allusion to the fallen or exiled angel, seeking ultimately to regain favour with his former creator. Under this optic, all of earthly existence is viewed as a realm of exile. On the other hand, Hitler is quite literally knocking on hell’s door, seeking to convert even this last bastion of exile into conquered territory and to create a dystopian world in which there is no place of refuge from terror and domination, no sense of an outside or a beyond.<sup>58</sup> Exile as an existential condition and a literary practice has thus confronted its historical realization, invoking the sense of absolute desperation that it has produced in those who are experiencing it. We are further reminded that we are in the realm of fantasy when a “converted” Mephisto, the unlikely hero of the drama, valiantly defends his territory by drowning the enemy in one fell swoop.

Hitler, von Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Göring, and the rest have been drowned; Faust and Mephisto unite and ascend into heaven; the play within the play comes to an end. We are left, in the final act, with the poet, the journalist and theatre critic Gershon Swet, and the scarecrow, convening in the garden of an ophthalmologist in Jerusalem.<sup>59</sup> If each of the figures discussed thus far has stood in for at least one other figure (and is therefore exiled from him- or herself), the scarecrow functions as the culmination of this phenomenon, explicitly standing in for several other figures drawn from the canons of high, popular, and religious culture. A not incidentally

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MEPHISTO: Nur Ewigkeit ist kein Exil. Zu ihr zu finden, Heinrich, durchstreiftest du das Erdental – nicht immer tugendhaft, doch immer unbefleckt das Land der – Sünden.” *Dramen*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>58</sup> One of the ways Said valorizes exile is by suggesting, with Adorno, that it is the “intellectual mission” of the exile to refuse the “administered” world of commodities, to retain the perspective of homelessness in a world in which the home has been made foreign. Said, p. 184.

<sup>59</sup> The historical referent here is the ophthalmologist Abraham Ticho (and his wife, the painter Anna Ticho), in whose house Lasker-Schüler occasionally took refuge. See Bauschinger, p. 424.

genderless figure, the scarecrow is at once an early twentieth-century antisemitic caricature known as “the little Cohn,”<sup>60</sup> a wandering Jew, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Goethe (and some of his literary creations, including Hermann and Dorothea), and finally, a reflection of the poet Lasker-Schüler herself.<sup>61</sup> The two characters engage in a bizarre dialogue about their respective origins:

ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER: We’re both poor children of Israel, in the same situation. And traipsing through the wilderness still today.  
 SCARECROW: Allow me to ask, where were you before, when it was still light?  
 ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER: I had a friendly invitation to *Switzerland* from Wilhelm Tell, before I found my way here.  
 SCARECROW: And Madame von Stein in Weimar hid me under her clothes stand.  
 ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER: How funny!  
 SCARECROW: However, I immediately went for a stroll on foot with Wolfgang, my intimate friend—  
 ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER: Through the eastern Divan?  
 SCARECROW: Through the eastern and western Divan, *entre nous, ma petite chérie*.<sup>62</sup>

That the two interlocutors are in an idyllic garden reminiscent of Eden underscores the irony of the conversation: even this garden, the scene of prelapsarian and pre-exilic history, constitutes the “wilderness” and is therefore under the sign of exile. The historical Palestine/Jerusalem comes to the fore in this exchange, as it invokes the paradox of what it means to be exiled to one’s ostensible homeland, which is supposed to offer unconditional deliverance. The poet and

<sup>60</sup> The satirical ballad, “Hab’n Sie nicht den kleinen Cohn geseh’n” by Julius Einödshofer, was a hit in Berlin around 1902; the titular figure became soon after an antisemitic caricature. See Vennemann, p. 83.

<sup>61</sup> Heinz Thiel has made the similar argument that the scarecrow can only be seen as the “external ego of the poet”: “Man darf die Vogelscheuche dabei nur als das äußerliche Ich der Dichterin betrachten, den als die Dichterin stirbt, bleibt die Vogelscheuche zurück.” Thiel, p. 153.

<sup>62</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis, p. 271. In the original:  
 “DIE DICHTERIN: Sind wir doch arme Kinder Israels beid, in gleicher Lage. Und traben heut noch in dem Wüstensande.  
 DIE VOGELSCHEUCHE: Erlaube mir zu fragen, wo warst du vorher all die Zeit? Als es noch hell?  
 DIE DICHTERIN: Sehr freundlich lud mich ein im Switzerland, becore ich herfand, Wilhelm Tell.  
 DIE VOGELSCHEUCHE: Und mich verbarg Madame von Stein in Weimar unter ihrem Kleidgestell.  
 DIE DICHTERIN: Wie drollig!  
 DIE VOGELSCHEUCHE: Jedoch alsbald spazierte ich zu Fuß mit Wolfgang, meinem Intimus.  
 DIE DICHTERIN: Durch den östlichen Divan?  
 DIE VOGELSCHEUCHE: Durch den öst- und westlichen Divan, *entre nous, ma petite chérie*.” *Dramen*, pp. 228-229. Lasker-Schüler’s German is sparser and syntactically more difficult to parse than the English translation would have it, which has smoothened out some of more fragment-like German phrases. For example, “wo warst du vorher all die Zeit? Als es noch hell?” has been rendered more straightforwardly, “where were you before, when it was still light?”



the scarecrow are, after all, still wandering; they are, indeed, “children of Israel” precisely *because* they are in perpetual exile. It is important to note here that Lasker-Schüler remained—even during the height of the Second World War—highly skeptical of certain strands of the Zionist movement that were less open to cohabitation with the native Arab population, for which she had abiding respect and sympathy.<sup>63</sup> And while Lasker-Schüler may have idealized her “Palästinawelt” in texts such as *Das Hebräerland* (written before she was forced to live there permanently) as a religious utopia of sorts, her daily experience of life in Jerusalem fell short of such idealizations.<sup>64</sup>

Returning to this particular dialogue, the literary figures mentioned above are, like the interlocutors themselves, no longer attached to their place of origin, as we see from the reference to Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell*, who invites the poet to join him in Switzerland (Lasker-Schüler’s first exilic residence). With this conflation of literary and historical figures, along with the montage of German, French, English and Hebrew that peppers the dialogue, all cultural markers—authors, characters, and languages—are unhinged from their more conventional use or place of origin.<sup>65</sup>

When the scarecrow begins to sing the opening lines of Book Three of Goethe’s *Wilhelm*

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<sup>63</sup> Most of Lasker-Schüler’s friends supported the “binational” model and retained this conviction even during the war. Her last poems appeared in the highly un-Zionist journal *Orient*, which was started by Arnold Zweig and modeled after the Berlin-based *Weltbühne*. The entire operation shut down, however, after the Hagana attempted to bomb it in 1943. For more on this, see Bauschinger, pp. 411-412.

<sup>64</sup> There is evidence to suggest that Palestine itself was a source of the thematic content of *Ich und Ich*. In *Das Hebräerland* by Lasker-Schüler we read: “Der künstlerische Mensch lebt in zwei Welten zu gleicher Zeit, auf seiner Erdenwelt und in seiner Phantasiewelt. Ich lebte hier in Palästina in drei Welten: Mit sanften Gedanken noch in der mir lieb gewordenen Stiefwelt Europas, mit Herz und Seele aber in der Palästina, die nicht von dieser Welt; so streifte ich auch schon die jenseitige.” Quoted in Itta Shedletzky, *Else Lasker-Schülers Jerusalem: Eine Chronik aus ihrem Nachlaß*, Jerusalem 1995, p. 98. Yet in reference to both Lasker-Schüler and the scarecrow in *Ich und Ich*, Jacob Lessing has written: “Beide traben durch den Wüstensand wie einst Kinder Israels und haben auch nach jahrtausendlangem Wanderschaft ihr Gelobtes Land noch nicht erreicht.” Quoted in Bodenheimer, p. 131.

<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the only character that would belong historically to this scene is the journalist and theatre critic Gershon Swet, who wants to write a review of the poet’s play. Swet (1893-1968) was, until 1933, a foreign correspondent in Berlin and was a journalist from 1935 to 1948 for the Hebrew-language newspaper *Ha’aretz*. See Vennemann, p. 80. On his role in the drama as a counterpoint to the scarecrow, Krauß has written that Swet perhaps represents those readers and critics in Palestine who can no longer decipher the “Kulturfragmente” that have been transported from Germany. See Krauß, p. 281.

*Meister's Apprenticeship*: “Knowest thou the land where the lemons grow, / In leafy green the oranges glow?”—alluding, perhaps, to the Holy Land of Jerusalem as he re-reads Goethe—he joins the chorus of German and German-Jewish signifiers united against the background of barbarism, loosening them from an exclusive association with either one of these categories.<sup>66</sup> The scarecrow is the drama’s exile *par excellence*, living a paper existence, though nonetheless nourished by multiple literary and cultural heritages.

It is precisely these destabilizing mechanisms, or these forms of exile, that provide the drama with its most effective critique of the exclusivity of National Socialist ideology. The Nazis are in part laughable because they represent nobody besides themselves; they are, in this sense, the only figures that are *not* living under the conditions of exile. The other characters in the drama, by contrast, only come to their full realization in and through their relations to other texts and historical trajectories. This is not meant to valorize the condition of exile, but rather to suggest how the drama’s critique of National Socialism functions in subtle and unusual ways. Quotation and intertextuality assume a wholly different valence when they are linked to the condition of exile, both historically and structurally. One final moment within (and outside of) this text best illustrates how this phenomenon functions. An early poem of Lasker-Schüler, “Chaos,” which seems to anticipate some of the themes that come to full fruition in *IchundIch*, reads as follows:

From the heaven of my solitude  
The stars fly by, horrorstricken,  
And the black eye of midnight  
Stares closer, closer.

In this desertion, like death,  
I lie estranged,  
Worlds away from myself,  
In grey night of dread.

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<sup>66</sup> Lasker-Schüler (originally Goethe), trans. by Curtis, p. 229. In the original: “Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen, / Im grünen Laub die Goldorangen glühen?” *Dramen*, p. 229.

I need a pain to pierce  
 To strike me cruelly down  
 To rip me into myself!  
 O, for the power, the will  
 To bear me back to my homeland  
 Beneath the maternal breast.

My motherland is soulless,  
 Roses no longer bloom  
 In her warm breath.  
 . . . Would I had my heart's beloved,  
 To bury myself in his flesh <sup>67</sup>

When this poem re-appears in the drama, it is no longer uttered by a lyrical 'I,' but is dispersed into the speech of Faust and Mephisto, two of the poet's alter egos. The poem has been once again exiled from its origin, only to be reborn in another (con)text. The slight modifications in the new iteration are worth noting: "In this desertion, like death [*in dieser Todverlassenheit*]" becomes "In an eternal blessedness that is foreign to me [*in der fremden ewigen Seligkeit*]" ; "in grey night [*Zwischen grauer Nacht*]" becomes "in first night [*Zwischen erster Nacht*]." Most important, however, is Mephisto's interruption of Faust's soliloquy: "My motherland [*meine*

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<sup>67</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Audri Durchslag-Litt and Jeanette Litman-Demeestère, *Selected Poems*, Copenhagen and Los Angeles 2002, pp. 54-57. Poem in the original:

"Die Sterne fliehen schreckensbleich  
 Vom Himmel meiner Einsamkeit,  
 Und das schwarze Auge der Mitternacht  
 Startt näher und näher.

Ich finde mich nicht wieder  
 In dieser Todverlassenheit!  
 Mir ist: ich lieg' von mir weltenweit  
 Zwischen grauer Nacht der Urangst . . .

Ich wollte, ein Schmerzen rege sich  
 Und stürze mich grausam nieder  
 Und riß mich jäh an mich!  
 Und es lege ein Schöpferlust  
 Mich wieder in meine Heimat  
 Unter der Mutterbrust

Meine Mutter Heimat ist seeeleer,  
 Es blühen dort keine Rosen  
 Im warmen Oden mehr. –  
 . . . Möcht' einen Herzallerliebsten haben!  
 Und mich in seinen Fleisch vergraben." Lasker-Schüler, *Gedichte*, pp. 22-23. An excerpt of this poem is also reproduced in "Das Gebet." See Lasker-Schüler, *Werke Band I*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 780.

*Mutterheimat*]” becomes “Your motherland [*Deine Mutterheimat*],” which has, indeed, lost its soul.<sup>68</sup> The poem’s central motifs—division, “motherland” (an explicit feminization of the more conventional “fatherland”), death, pain, fear, and Faustian desire—are preserved in this dialogue, but they are reconfigured by Faust and Mephisto against the backdrop of National Socialism and its existential threat to both German and German-Jewish culture. Once again, book-related affinities pose a challenge to an ideology soaked in blood.

While lamenting the exilic existence of the poet and the various figures that comprise the drama, an existence that never once forgets the “soulless” world that has determined it, *IchundIch* nonetheless affirms a utopian vision that lies beyond this dark moment. We see this when the poet, “now a heavenly angel,” reappears in the epilogue and suggests—in response to the *Gretchenfrage*—that God lies over “here!” somewhere behind the curtain.<sup>69</sup> Her statement, I would argue, expresses not so much a theological commitment as it does a desire for the kind of plenitude that the poet had been denied in her earthly existence. If, then, Faust and Mephisto (and Goethe) are parodied in their use of a classical German verse that appears so out of place at this historical juncture, they are at the same time rescued from a cultural narrative that seeks to make them the exclusive property of National Socialist ideology. Such was part of the task of staging exile in Jerusalem in 1941 for Lasker-Schüler. In its melancholic and yet at times hopeful staging of the German-Jewish tragedy, *IchundIch* serves as a singular example of theatre in exile.

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<sup>68</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis, p. 265; *Dramen*, p. 224.

<sup>69</sup> Lasker-Schüler, trans. by Curtis, pp. 278-279. Quote in the original: “Die Dichterin spricht oder einer der Engel,” and “Gott ist ‘da’!!!” *Dramen*, p. 235.