During the autumn of 1989 a collection of some 350 German books arrived in Manchester, acquired by the John Rylands University Library from Susanne Huchel, daughter of the German poet Peter Huchel (1903–81). The possible transfer of the collection to Manchester was first discussed in July 1988 during a visit (generously supported by the University’s staff travel fund) which I made to Susanne Huchel’s home in Mora, Sweden. Subsequently, a number of Manchester colleagues, notably Dr Michael Pegg, Mr David Miller, Professor Roger Paulin and Mr John Tuck, played key roles in negotiations which were successfully concluded in the early summer of 1989. I should like to take this opportunity to thank these colleagues for their advice and support. I should also like to express my gratitude to Susanne Huchel; her decision to give Manchester first refusal on her parents’ library represents the most recent of a whole series of acts of generosity in the support of my research over nearly a decade.

Most of the books were acquired by the Huchels between 1925 and 1946, the years that Peter Huchel spent together with his first wife, Dora, a person as committed to literature as her husband and whose tastes are also reflected in the collection. A number of texts can, however, be traced back to Huchel’s schooldays in Potsdam, where he passed Abitur in 1923 before attending the universities of Berlin, Freiburg and Vienna. It was in Vienna in late 1925 that he met Dora Lassel from Kronstadt, Transylvania. After Vienna, the couple spent two years in Paris before settling in Berlin in 1929. They married the following year, living predominantly in Berlin but enjoying lengthy stays in Kronstadt before moving to the village of Michendorf near Potsdam in 1934. Michendorf remained the family home until 1946 when the Huchels separated. Peter Huchel took almost all his manuscripts with him but the vast majority of the books in the library remained in Dora Huchel’s hands.

Throughout the period in question Huchel was never in a position to purchase expensive editions. The antiquarian approaching the collection with the expectation that it will contain exquisite editions of great age will be disappointed; indeed, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century classics in the collection are, with few exceptions,
in unremarkable late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century editions. A measure of compensation is afforded by first editions of early twentieth-century classics, which reveal a keen eye for new or recent work of quality. Clearly, however, the value of the collection for the antiquarian will be enhanced by its association with Huchel, while the presence of many copies signed by Huchel and others adds further value.

The main significance of the library is that it contains texts with which an author can be seen to have worked; for the literary historian the library affords unique insights into Huchel’s literary tastes and development, including the possibility of tracing key influences through the examination of annotations and marginalia. The presence of a number of texts dedicated by contemporaries sheds light on his relations with other writers, especially during the thirties. While the private library of any writer represents a unique source of information, in the case of Huchel the value of the library for the researcher is heightened by the fact that he has hitherto been regarded as a singularly ‘enigmatic figure’.¹ The enigma is, moreover, at its most impenetrable concerning the first half of Huchel’s career. Beyond the question of a temperamental inclination towards privacy, the coincidence of a significant portion of Huchel’s early career with that heavily stigmatized period of recent German history, National Socialism, undoubtedly contributed to the growth of the enigma. At a time when a more dispassionate appreciation of German literary culture not only during but also immediately before and after National Socialism is now becoming possible, the library may be seen to illustrate the continuing existence through the Third Reich of an essentially non-Nazi strand in writing produced in Germany in the thirties and forties. As one might expect, however, and as the contents of the library demonstrate, Huchel’s position was not without its ambiguities and indeed compromises. While it is ultimately the literary historian rather than the antiquarian who stands to profit most from the library, in the following I shall seek to do justice to the books in both respects.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the unremarkable editions of Arnim, Büchner, Droste-Hülshoff, Goethe, Grillparzer, Kleist, Lenau, Lessing, Schiller, Shakespeare and Wieland. One would expect to encounter these names in the library of any educated German, just as one could count on the presence of individual works by figures such as Brentano, Bürger, Matthias Claudius, Eichendorff, Fontane, Gotthelf, Hebbel, Hebel, Heine, Hölderlin, Jean Paul, Keller, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, Mörike, Rückert, Friedrich Schlegel, Stifter, Storm and Tieck. The principal interest of these lists is that in them one can trace a preference for early to mid-nineteenth-century writers, to some extent Romantics but more specifically poets of the Biedermeierzeit, who in the thirties exercised a considerable influence on

Huchel’s poetry. In this way, Huchel’s taste can be seen to match that of other more traditionally-minded writers in the late twenties, thirties and forties, who – after the avant-garde experimentalism of the 1910s and 1920s – sought to explore once again the potential inherent in the tradition.

Perhaps the only noteworthy exception among otherwise insignificant editions of the classics is provided by the two volumes of Schiller’s *Gedichte* published in Leipzig in 1807 and 1808 in a third edition by Siegfried Leberecht Crusius. In 1800 a pirated edition of Schiller’s *Sämtliche Gedichte* appeared, prompting Schiller to collect his poems and publish them as soon as possible. A first volume, containing with only five exceptions poems written since 1795, was published by Crusius in 1800; the second volume appeared in 1803. In the same year a second edition of the first volume appeared, in 1804 a second edition of the second volume. The third edition of 1807–08 was not followed by further editions; in 1808 the elderly Crusius gave up his publishing business and it was left to Crusius’ rival, Cotta, to produce the great Schiller editions following the poet’s death in 1805.

It is in the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the library contains the most treasures. They may be grouped according to publishers, series and authors in order to establish the broad parameters of Huchel’s tastes. Within these parameters specific influences in Huchel’s development as a writer can be traced. Apart from such exclusive projects as the private presses Verlag der Bremer Presse and Blätter für die Kunst as well as such a classic series as Kurt Wolff’s *Der jüngste Tag*, the publishing giants of German literature from that period, the S. Fischer Verlag and the Insel Verlag, are both well represented in the library.

Samuel Fischer founded his Berlin publishing house in 1886 and rapidly established himself as the ‘Cotta of Naturalism’. Following the publication of Gerhart Hauptmann’s *Vor Sonnenaufgang* in 1889 by C.F. Conrad, Fischer took over the rights for that work and for Hauptmann’s other work from *Das Friedensfest* (1890) onwards. Among early Hauptmann publications by Fischer was *Hannele*. The 1894 edition, beautifully illustrated by Julius Exter, is the finest of the Hauptmann editions in the Huchel collection. The copy is, moreover, ex libris Dr Franz Ullstein of the Berlin publishing house of the same name. A further Hauptmann work of significance in the library is a 1921 first edition of *Anna*.

---

2 Peter de Mendelssohn explains in his *S. Fischer und sein Verlag* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1970), 174, that until the early 1960s the 1894 edition was regarded as the first edition: ‘Erst 1962 tauchte eine der Forschung bis dahin völlig unbekannte, mit 1893 datierte, ebenfalls bei Fischer erschienene Ausgabe mit dem Titelblatt *Hannele Matterns Himmelfahrt*, Musik von Max Marschalk auf, die wesentliche Abweichungen von der Exter-Ausgabe aufweist, vor allem zahlreiche Stellen, die in der illustrierten Ausgabe gestrichen sind ... Von der illustrierten Ausgabe wiederum gelangte nur ein kleiner Teil der Auflage in den Buchhandel. Fischer zog sie auf Hauptmanns Wunsch alsbald wieder zurück’.
As is well known, in the early years of the century Fischer, like other publishers, sought - as he himself put it - to contribute to the development of a more democratic culture (and, he might have added, to exploit lucrative new market opportunities) through publishing major contemporary works in cheap editions for a mass readership. The distinctive S. Fischer contribution was Fischers Bibliothek zeitgenössischer Romane. Costing one mark each, a text appeared every month from October 1908 over the next eight years. Among early novels in the series was Hermann Hesse's *Unterm Rad*. It had appeared originally in 1906, and Fischer succeeded in persuading Hesse to release it for the new, popular series. Following publication in 1909, in all 108,000 copies of *Unterm Rad* were printed. Other texts from the series in the Huchel library are Tolstoy's *Chadschi Marat* and Knut Hamsun's *Pan*.

At the time, Hamsun and other Scandinavian writers were very much in vogue in Germany and Huchel evidently shared the general enthusiasm. The library illustrates the important role played by Fischer in the dissemination of Scandinavian literature. He published, among others, Björnsterne Bjørnson, whose five-volume *Gesammelte Werke*, retranslated and edited by Julius Elias, appeared in 1914. Of Scandinavian dramatists, it was Ibsen who had been the key influence on German Naturalism, a fact brought home in Fischer's publication of Emil Reich's study *Henrik Ibsen*. Also represented in the library, though not as Fischer authors, are Strindberg and Selma Lagerlöf, through her cult novel *Gosta Berling*, in an edition published by Albert Langen.

To return to authors published by Fischer, it is striking that two of the major novelists of the period, Alfred Döblin and Thomas Mann, are represented by only one novel each; Döblin by *Berge Meere Giganten* of 1924 and Mann by the special 1930 edition of *Buddenbrooks*, which appeared following Mann's award of the Nobel Prize in 1929. (Both texts bear Huchel's signature.) However, another distinguished Fischer author, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, is more generously represented. Of the seventeen Hofmannsthal texts in the library, nine are Fischer publications. Among them is a first edition of the drama *Das gerettete Venedig* (1905), which bears the signature of Huchel's friend, the composer Götz Kozuschek. The library also contains the third, 1927 version of *Der Turm* and the posthumous *Nachlese der Gedichte*, which appeared in 1934, also the year of Samuel Fischer's death. (Almost immediately afterwards, his successor, Gottfried Bermann-Fischer, began making plans to move the company out of Germany. It went first to Vienna, then in 1938 to Stockholm.)

Fischer was one of a number of outlets for Hofmannsthal's work, and the library contains excellent examples of his activities in an editorial and publishing capacity, these efforts being part of his conservative programme for cultural regeneration. Significant in this respect is his two-volume *Deutsches Lesebuch: eine Auswahl deutscher
Prosastücke aus dem Jahrhundert 1750–1850. The library contains the second, revised and extended edition of 1926. It also contains a first edition of 1927 of the similarly important Wert und Ehre deutscher Sprache, for which Hofmannsthal selected outstanding pieces of writing from the German tradition. Both the Deutsches Lesebuch and Wert und Ehre deutscher Sprache were published in the exclusive private press Verlag der Bremer Presse, co-founded by Hofmannsthal with, among others, Rudolf Borchardt and the Bremen-born Rudolf Alexander Schröder. Originally situated in Bremen, the press moved to Munich in 1921. Hofmannsthal himself outlined the programme of the press as one designed to reawaken a sense of tradition, thereby to bring about the regeneration of a sense of cultural cohesion. He concluded his ‘Ankündigung des Verlags der Bremer Presse’ of 1922 as follows: ‘ein Unterfangen wie die Gründung dieses Verlages postuliert ein Publikum, wie es vor hundert Jahren da war, sich heute verspaltet hat und aus tausend Individuen zum Publikum erst wieder gemacht werden müßte’. 3

In addition to Hofmannsthal’s own contributions to the Verlag der Bremer Presse, the library contains a 1922 first edition, signed by Huchel, of Borchardt’s Deutschland, his translation of Tacitus’ De origine et situ Germanorum. Other Borchardt works in the library are his Ausgewählte Werke, 1900–1918, published by Rowohlt in Berlin in 1925, and his Krippenspiel, also published by Rowohlt, in 1922. The latter text is of significance in that it is ‘Aus dem Nachlaß Wolf Pryzgode’. Pryzgode belonged to the circle around the Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag in Potsdam in the early twenties. The other co-founder of the Verlag der Bremer Presse mentioned above, Rudolf Alexander Schröder, is represented in the library by a first edition of Der Wanderer und die Heimat, published in 1931 by the Insel Verlag, Leipzig. A further work by Schröder, Elysium, was also published by Insel, as number 239 in its illustrious series, the Insel-Bücherei.

The series was launched in 1912 (seven years after the founding of the Insel Verlag itself) with Rilke’s Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke. In a manner not dissimilar to Fischers Bibliothek zeitgenössischer Romane, the Insel-Bücherei sought to present cheap editions of quality works to a growing mass readership without, however, sacrificing quality in terms of paper, printing, illustrations, binding and the use of a hard cover. (The distinctive approach of the Insel-Bücherei, we might note, has proved its worth over nearly eighty years.) Hofmannsthal was happy to see his work published in the series: three texts are to be found in the library: Reden und Aufsätze, Alkestis and Der Tor und der Tod. They are among the thirty-five texts from the Insel-Bücherei in the library.

Those who view Huchel through post-Second World War eyes as the unorthodox Marxist poet and editor of *Sinn und Form* disillusioned by the Stalinist practices of the GDR in the fifties may be surprised at the mention of such figures as Hofmannsthal, Schröder and Borchardt rather than of names connected with the strong socialist strand of writing in Germany during the early decades of the century. While such names are not wholly absent, the library contains further evidence of a preference for what can be called, very broadly, a neo-romantic aestheticism. There are a number of books by George and Rilke, who, for all their differences, rank together with Hofmannsthal as the most prominent exponents of this orientation in lyric poetry in the first decades of the century. There can be little doubt that Huchel began to read Rilke and George while still at school and that the young poet regarded the values which they embodied, above all the channelling of all their energies into the cause of art and their disdain for the messiness of everyday life, as a most attractive alternative to his own stultifying lower-middle-class background.

Rilke, the most prominent author of the Insel Verlag, is represented by ten texts in the library, including his translations of Elizabeth Barret-Browning’s *Sonette aus dem Portugiesischen* and of Die 24 *Sonette der Louise Labé*. These two translations appeared in the Insel-Bücherei, as did *Der ausgewählten Gedichte anderer Teil*, *Die Weise von Leben und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke* and *Das Marienleben*. More significant Insel Verlag productions are a 1909 first edition of the collection *Die frühen Gedichte* and the 1918 second edition in two volumes of *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*. Both volumes are signed by Huchel. Arguably more interesting still are a 1923 first edition of *Sonette an Orpheus*, which includes annotations in Huchel’s hand, and a first edition, also from 1923, of *Duineser Elegien*.

Including translations, the library contains seven volumes by George. Apart from George’s earliest publications in 1890–91, all his works from 1892 onwards appeared under the auspices of the exclusive Verlag Blätter für die Kunst founded that year by George. He permitted only one selection of his poems to appear elsewhere: in 1930 Friedrich Wolters, a member of the George-Kreis, edited a strongly nationalist selection, *Gedichte*, published in Hirt’s Deutsche Sammlung, Breslau. This publication represented ‘Die einzige, nur mit Widerstreben erlaubte Auswahl’.*4 The marks set alongside the titles of poems on the contents page reflect the fascination that continued to be exercised by George on Huchel in the early thirties. Other texts by George in the library were clearly of importance from the early twenties onwards. Though none of the six other volumes published in the Verlag Blätter für die Kunst are first editions, they gain in significance through annotations or the fact that they are signed copies.

---

George’s rendering of Baudelaire’s *Die Blumen des Bösen* in a sixth edition of 1922 (first edition 1901) bears Huchel’s signature. The first of the two volumes *Zeitgenössische Dichter*, in a third edition of 1923 (first edition 1905), contains inside the back cover in Huchel’s hand a four-line verse echoing George’s style, which appears in modified form as the final stanza of ‘Vorfrühling’ first published in Huchel’s collection *Gedichte* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1948) and now in the Huchel *Gesammelte Werke*. Attention was recently drawn to the fact that poems among Huchel’s earliest publications in 1925 in the *Freiburger Figaro* are derivative of George’s work. Information from Huchel’s papers contained in the *Gesammelte Werke* (i. 443) further indicates that two of the poems in question, ‘Der Abschied’ and ‘Abendlied’, were composed as early as 1921. Two of the seven George volumes in the library could have been in Huchel’s possession by that year, the 1919 third edition of *Der Stern des Bundes* (first edition 1914) and the 1920 fifth edition of *Der siebente Ring* (first edition 1907). *Der siebente Ring* is of further interest in that on page 159 it contains, in Huchel’s hand, instructions for the typesetting of George’s poem ‘An baches ranft’, apparently for inclusion in an anthology. The remaining work by George in the collection is *Das Jahr der Seele*, published in 1928 as the fourth volume of the *George Gesamtausgabe* (1928–34), after first publication in 1897. Towards the back there are reproductions of poems in George’s own hand, while near the front there are imitations of George’s hand by the aspiring poet Huchel.

As indicated above, Huchel’s earliest compositions date from his Potsdam schooldays. A library copy of the journal *Das Kunstblatt* from June 1925 sheds further light on them. Edited by Paul Westheim for Gustav Kiepenheuer’s Potsdam publishing house, *Das Kunstblatt* contains two poems by Huchel, ‘Du Name Gott’ and ‘Die Begegnung am Meer’, which figure among his earliest compositions and earliest publications. According to information in the *Gesammelte Werke* (i. 443), the typescript of ‘Du Name Gott’ among Huchel’s papers is dated 1919. The poem derives much of its imagery from the early Rilke, most obviously from the poem ‘Du Nachbar Gott’ of 1899. ‘Die Begegnung am Meer’, echoing Richard Dehmel’s vitalist dithyrambs in his *Zwei Menschen*, can be dated, approximately at least, by means of the dedication to Dora in *Das Kunstblatt*, which reads ‘Lieber Titzho, solchen Blödsinn schrieb ich mit 17 Jahren. Der jetzt wissende, Helmut’. Huchel continued to use his Christian name Helmut until 1930, when he began signing himself Peter Huchel for publications in *Die literarische Welt*.

5 Peter Huchel, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Axel Vieregg, 2 volumes (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), i. 90. Hereafter references to the edition will be included in the main body of the article, volume and page numbers appearing in brackets.

The fact that in 1925 Huchel was able to place the two poems with Kiepenheuer’s *Kunstblatt* indicates that by then he had established some links with the Potsdam publishing world, which included, too, Rütten und Loening and the highly esteemed printer Eduard Stichnote. It was to Rütten und Loening and to Stichnote that Huchel would turn in 1948 when, as editor of *Sinn und Form*, he was seeking to get that venture off the ground. He also turned for advice to another Potsdam figure already prominent in the early twenties, Hermann Kasack. Kasack had at that time played a key role in the development of the Kiepenheuer Verlag:


When still a pupil at the Oberrealschule, Am Kanal, Huchel could observe the famous as they came and went. He acquired some of their books as well as books by others published in the early twenties by Kiepenheuer. For instance, the library contains Kiepenheuer editions of work by Kaiser, who switched from Fischer in 1919. New Kiepenheuer editions are *Die Bürger von Calais* of 1920 (originally published in 1914) and *Das Frauenopfer* of 1922 (originally published in 1918). Also of interest is the 1922 publication of a lecture on Hölderlin delivered in 1916 by Gustav Landauer. Landauer, whose thinking influenced Kaiser, had been murdered in 1919 by Free Corps soldiers during the Munich Revolution. Among other Kiepenheuer publications from the time which found their way into the Huchel library are Tolstoy’s *Kreuzer-Sonate* of 1922, Turgenev’s *Visionen und andere phantastische Erzählungen* of 1918 and Edgar Allan Poe’s *Novellen des Todes* of 1912.

Two other authors mentioned above, Brecht and Max Hermann (-Neiße), figure in the library, though not through Kiepenheuer publications. Max Hermann’s *Empörung Andacht Ewigkeit* belongs to a small group of texts from the illustrious Expressionist series Der jüngste Tag launched in May 1913 by Kurt Wolff Verlag, Leipzig. Wolff and his editorial team of Kurt Pinthus, Franz Werfel and Walter Hasenclever founded the series as competition for the new Insel-Bücherei. In all eighty-six texts appeared in the series between 1913 and 1921. Two of the six volumes with which the series was launched in May 1913 found their way into the Huchel library, number one in the series, Franz Werfel’s *Die Versuchung: Ein Gespräch*, and number three, Franz Kafka’s *Der Heizer: Ein Fragment*. Following Kafka’s

---

collection of stories *Betrachtung*, published by Wolff’s collaborator Ernst Rowohlt in just 800 copies in December 1912, *Der Heizer* marks Kafka’s second book publication. Kafka is further represented in the library by another volume from Der jüngste Tag, *Die Verwandlung*. The first edition appeared in 1915. The library copy is a second edition, probably of 1918, though some commentators are guided by the copyright of 1917. *Die Verwandlung* takes on greater importance in that it contains the dedication ‘Für Dora Ostern 1926 Helmut’. We might finally note a fifth volume from Der jüngste Tag, Franz Blei’s translation of Paul Claudel’s *Die Musen: Eine Ode*. If already through *Der Heizer* and *Die Verwandlung* we can establish that Huchel was an early Kafka reader, then the picture is supplemented by a third volume, *Ein Hungerkünstler: Vier Geschichten*, the library copy bearing Huchel’s signature. Published not by Wolff but by the Berlin Verlag die Schmiede, *Ein Hungerkünstler* was the final collection of stories authorized for publication by Kafka in his lifetime. The volume in fact appeared posthumously, with a print-run of at most 3,000.

As a result of Wolff’s promotion of the young Expressionist generation, he has rightly gained a reputation as the publisher of Expressionist work. Yet at the time ‘die rasch wachsende Produktion fand nicht unbedingt und sofort ihre Leser. Die Zimelien heutiger Büchersammlungen gingen damals durchaus zu Schleuderpreisen über den Ladentisch’. In the somewhat straitened financial circumstances, Wolff was pleased to welcome such an established author as Heinrich Mann, who joined Wolff in 1916 and whose earlier works Wolff reissued with great success, among them the library copy of *Professor Unrat*. When in 1923 Wolff abandoned the publication of quality literature, Mann, like Werfel and Carl Sternheim, moved to the recently-founded Paul Zsolnay Verlag in Vienna. The library contains a first edition of Mann’s *Liliane und Paul*, published by Zsolnay in 1926. Until he sold off all his publishing interests in 1930, Wolff concentrated his efforts on the production of fine art books. He continued to find room in his programme for the work of the Flemish artist Frans Masereel, who had been published by Wolff from 1920 and whose collection of woodcuts from 1929, *Landschaften und Stimmungen*, is in the Huchel collection.

In addition to a substantial amount of work by the major early influences, Rilke and George, the library contains other noteworthy collections of poems, particularly from the early to mid-twenties. If the reader is surprised to find no work by the early Expressionists Trakl

---

9 ibid., 94.
and Heym (and is therefore inclined to assume that Huchel took copies of their work with him in 1946), then the selection of texts in the library opens up new perspectives, especially in relation to poetry in translation. Among them are Klabund’s *Das Blumenschiff: Nachdichtungen chinesischer Lyrik*, published in Berlin by Erich Reiß in 1921 and containing particularly fine illustrations. A good example of Insel’s bookcraft is provided by Hans Bethge’s *Chinesische Flöte* of 1923, the significance of which is enhanced by the dedication ‘Für Dich Weihnacht 1925 Dora’. Huchel and Dora Lassel met in the autumn of that year. Other texts worthy of note are: Erna Rehwohlt’s translation of Emile Verhaeren’s *Gedichte*, published by Axel Juncker (Berlin, 1921); the translation by Eduard Saenger of Shakespeare’s sonnets, published in a second edition of 1923 by Insel; de Musset’s *Dichtungen*, translated by Herbert Eulenberg for Propyläen (Berlin, 1923); Shelley’s *Dichtungen* in a new translation by Alfred Wolfenstein, published by Paul Cassirer (Berlin, 1922). Cassirer was also the publisher, in 1925, and Wolfenstein the translator of Paul Verlaine’s *Gedichte*. The library copy is particularly interesting in that it contains a dedication by Wolfenstein to Friedrich Burschell, the essayist, journalist and translator. Between 1931 and 1933 Burschell lived in the same block of flats as the Huchels in Kreuznacherstraße, Laubenheimer Platz, Berlin Wilmersdorf. The flats were part of a *Künstlerkolonie* reserved for artists and intellectuals. It would seem reasonable to assume that the book found its way to the Huchels in those years. Among other neighbours were friends such as Ernst and Karola Bloch and Alfred Kantorowicz who, like Burschell, left Germany in 1933.

Among the most acclaimed volumes of poetry from the twenties is Bertolt Brecht’s *Hauspostille*, a first edition of which is in the library. Inside the back cover there is, in Huchel’s hand, a quite unsophisticated sketch of, it appears, Brecht. As a result of post-war collaboration on *Sinn und Form*, Brecht’s name has often been linked with Huchel, some critics arguing that the link was strong in the period before 1933.11 There is, however, little evidence to substantiate this claim, and certainly in Huchel’s poetry published at the time only one composition, ‘Weihnachtslied’ of 1931, can be said to draw on Brecht’s example in his *Hauspostille*, the poem in question being the first in the collection ‘Vom Brot und den Kindlein’. This composition apart, the note of social protest is not strong in Huchel’s verse published in the twenties and early thirties.

Another volume of poems in the library has a very specific link with Brecht. In 1930 Kiepenheuer published a special edition of K.L. Ammer’s translation of Villon’s *Balladen*, and the edition included a

11 See, for instance, Hans Mayer, who, in his afterword to Huchel’s *Margarethe Minde* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), 77, writes: ‘Auch weiß man, daß er in Berlin regen Umgang gehabt hatte mit Leuten wie Brecht und Bloch und Benjamin, deren Texte er, wie man weiß, später nachdrucken oder neudrucken sollte in seiner Zeitschrift *Sinn und Form*. ’
sonnet composed by Brecht specially for the edition. The background to Brecht’s contribution was, as Reinhold Grimm writes, ‘der lärmende Skandal um die Dreigroschenoper vom Jahre 1929. Bertolt Brecht hatte eine ganze Anzahl von Versen, teilweise sogar halbe Strophen, aus der Klammerschen Villon-Übersetzung übernommen, und zwar mehr oder minder wörtlich.’

The influential critic Alfred Kerr accused Brecht of plagiarism and fuelled what became a major Berlin theatre scandal, the new Villon edition being a by-product of it. Kerr himself is represented in the library by a copy, signed by Huchel, of part of his collected works, *Die Welt im Licht*, a Fischer publication from 1920. The world of Berlin theatre pundits is further represented by Alfred Polgar, from 1926 critic for *Die literarische Welt*, whose book *Hinterland* was published by Rowohlt in 1929. The late twenties also saw the publication of high-quality investigative journalism by the left-wing figure, Egon Erwin Kisch, the ‘rasender Reporter’ famed for his *Wagnisse in aller Welt*, the title of a collection of pieces of reportage which appeared in 1927 in the Universum-Bücherei für alle. This text is the only one in the library produced by a figure associated in the final years of the Weimar Republic with the communist *Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller*.

Shortly after returning to Berlin from Paris in 1929, Huchel began to place his work on a quite regular basis in the liberal magazine *Die literarische Welt*. Poems which appeared in 1930 were Huchel’s first publications since his earliest in the mid-twenties in such organs as *Das Kunstblatt* and the *Freiburger Figaro*. In Willy Haas, the editor of *Die literarische Welt*, Huchel found someone prepared to use his influence to promote the young poet. In a special double number of the magazine in April 1932 dedicated to ‘Junge Dichtung’, Haas singled out Huchel for special praise, along with Elisabeth Langgasser and Georg Britting. The terms in which that praise is expressed indicate clearly the artistic and intellectual orientation of this new writing:

Diese Jugend geht sogar tiefer unter das Maß des Artistischen zurück, als wir Älteren es im allgemeinen für möglich gehalten hätten ... Es wird hier noch sehr von alten Literatur – und Dichtungsvorstellungen zu konservieren versucht ... Man kann sogar, wenn man will, in der relativ konventionellen Wahl der Themen einen Vorzug finden: es ist der erste Ansatz zu einer mittleren Traditionsgebundenheit über Generationen hinweg, den wir in der deutschen Literatur seit Jahrzehnten erlebt haben ... eine Erscheinung wie Peter Huchel aber ist schon, so jung er ist, eine Figur von Rang ... Gewiß ist bedauerlich, daß das Experimentative ... so ganz fehlt.

Haas’ evaluation indicates how, following the experimentalism so

---

much to the fore in the 1910s and 1920s, these young writers of the early 1930s offered a new traditionalism in an increasingly conservative cultural climate. In Rilke and George, Huchel had from the outset looked principally to figures from the pre-Expressionist period (though the early Expressionists Trakl and Heym clearly exercised some influence), and throughout the thirties Huchel related back to somewhat older models still. The poetry of Hebbel, for instance, assumed considerable importance near the beginning of the decade, the library containing a collection of Hebbel’s verse edited by Karl Bröger under the title *Steigendes, neigendes Leben* and published by the Verlag Fritz Heyder, Berlin-Zehlendorf. As Dora Huchel confirmed in conversation in September 1981, the fine poem ‘Oktoberlicht’, composed in 1931, draws on Hebbel’s famous ‘Herbstbild’. Other compositions from the period echo Hebbel’s themes, diction and versification.

‘Oktoberlicht’ was one of Huchel’s first poems to be anthologized, in *Die schönsten deutschen Gedichte*, edited by Ludwig Goldschneider and published by Phaidon (Vienna and Leipzig) in 1932. That year signalled a breakthrough for Huchel. His poetry was also included in *Neue lyrische Anthologie*, edited by Martin Raschke for Wolfgang Jess, Dresden, and in *Mit allen Sinnen: Lyrik unserer Zeit*, edited by Carl Dietrich Carls and Arno Ullmann for the Berlin Rembrandt-Verlag. The library copy of the latter anthology is of some interest in that on pages 61 and 62 there are, in Huchel’s hand, alterations and additions to the poem ‘Holunder’ suggesting an adaptation of the poem for presentation on the radio, verses to be spoken alternately by a male and female voice. Radio adaptations of his own work and that of others became an increasingly important source of income as the decade progressed.

1932 also saw the award of Huchel’s first prize, the *Kolonne* prize for poetry, which he received jointly with Horst Lange. The short-lived journal *Die Kolonne* (1929–32), edited by Martin Raschke and A.A. Kuhnert and published by Wolfgang Jess, has become, in recent years, a focus of attention in the investigation of the continuity of a non-Nazi strand of writing in Germany through the thirties and forties. In addition to the above names, the circle included, among others, Günter Eich, Eberhard Meckel, Elisabeth Langgässer and Oda Schaefer, who was married to Horst Lange. Huchel’s involvement with the group on a personal as well as literary level began in 1932, when he got to know the Langes and Langgässer. These and other liberal-conservative figures would remain as friends in Germany after other left-wing friends such as Bloch and Kantorowicz had fled the country in 1933. Library copies of works by Langgässer, Eich and Lange illustrate his attachment to the *Kolonne* circle, which remained in close contact until 1945. Langgässer, for example, presented Huchel with two works published in 1932, *Grenze: Besetztes Gebeit* and *Triptychon des Teufels*, the former published in Berlin by
Morgenland-Verlag, the latter by Wolfgang Jess. Both library copies are accompanied by a dedication, the first reading ‘Peter Huchel zu eigen von Elisabeth Langgässer, 1 Mai 1932’, the second ‘Peter Huchel zu eigen! Nov 1932 Elisabeth Langgässer’.

An outlet of some importance for the Kolonome circle through the thirties, V.O. Stomps’ Rabenpresse, was the publisher of Horst Lange’s Zwölf Gedichte, which appeared in 1933. The copy in the Huchel library contains the dedication ‘Das tägliche Brot für meine lieben Huchels, Horst Lange, Berlin August 1933’, the dedication alluding to the title of the first of the twelve poems. The library contains three other prose texts by Lange, Auf dem östlichen Ufer of 1939, Ulanenpatrouille of 1940, and his major novel Schwarze Weide of 1937. Schwarze Weide contains, in Lange’s hand, the motto which also acts as the final statement of the novel: ‘Alles, was da kreucht, wird mit der Geissel zur Weide getrieben’. Also in Lange’s hand, we can read ‘Für Piese und Dora, in der Hoffnung, dass sie mein Sorgenkind gut aufnehmen werden. Berlin Sept 1937 H.’ The dedication to the Huchels gains further significance in the light of the fact that Piese, as Huchel was known to friends, was consulted by Lange concerning problems with the composition of the novel. If Lange’s name nowadays means little outside specialist circles, then it should not be forgotten that in the thirties he was regarded by some as one of the leading novelists in Germany. Sebastian Haffner, who in the mid-thirties worked as an editor on the Berlin fashion magazine Die Dame prior to coming to Britain in 1938, described Lange as a ‘Dichter europäischen Ranges’ following the publication of Schwarze Weide.

Die Dame was another outlet where Kolonome writers placed their work in the thirties and early forties, among them Günter Eich. Of the group, it is Eich who made the greatest impact in the post-war era in West Germany. In similar fashion to Huchel, until recently his pre-1945 career remained shrouded in obscurity. Among Eich’s works from that time is the Novelle Katharina, published in 1936 in Leipzig by Paul List. Eich, who was Susanne Huchel’s godfather, presented the Huchels with a copy of his book. Katharina had first appeared in 1935 in the Munich journal Das innere Reich, in the pages of which work by other Kolonome writers can be found. Nine poems by Huchel appeared in 1934 and 1935, among them the six poems which comprise the cycle ‘Strophen aus einem Herbst’. The cycle is one of Huchel’s most significant poetic statements during the National


Socialist period. It is unfortunate that its importance does not emerge in the 1984 Huchel Gesammelte Werke, where the poems are presented merely as individual entities. As a result, the strain of melancholy and, finally, despair that grows in intensity on reading the cycle is lost. The Huchel library furthers our appreciation of the cycle in that it contains evidence that in its composition Huchel was drawing on the achievement of an earlier Melancholiker from the Biedermeierzeit, Nikolaus Lenau. The library contains two editions of Lenau’s collected works as well as his Gedichte, the first volume of the 1857 Cotta edition. Several poems in the table of contents are marked, among them ‘Herbstentschlüß’, imagery and the tone of which can be traced in the final poem in Huchel’s cycle ‘November-Endlied’. Lenau is known as a poet who expressed his despair at the system presided over by Metternich. Through drawing upon his precursor Lenau, Huchel, it may be argued, reinforces his expression of despair at his world, that of National Socialist Germany.

Revealing though this affinity between the poet in Nazi Germany and the earlier poet in the Biedermeierzeit may be, the parallel cannot be taken so very far. Huchel by no means maintained a clearly defined artistic position in these years; only one other poem, ‘Im nassen Sand’, published in Die Dame in 1941, markedly develops the theme of melancholy. In a number of other poems from the mid-thirties which appeared in Das innere Reich and Das Almanach der Dame, Huchel adopted a starker tone more akin to mid-nineteenth-century realism. Examples are ‘Letzte Fahrt’ (Das innere Reich, 1934) and ‘Winter’ (Almanach der Dame, 1935). The first and second volumes of Das Almanach der Dame from 1935 are among the texts in the library. The second volume includes the poem ‘Das Kinderfenster’, in which an altogether more tender, playful tone prevails and which is of undeniable significance for the Huchel collection: dedicated to Susanne, the poem was written to celebrate her birth in 1935.

This style was by no means unfamiliar to Huchel, since in 1934 he began to compose radio plays, some for broadcast on children’s radio. Four texts in the library on which Huchel worked in some detail are of particular value in extending our knowledge of his radio work. The editor of the Huchel Gesammelte Werke, drawing on Huchel’s own testimony, reports that in all Huchel wrote thirty-five radio plays ‘von denen 11 als verschollen gelten müssen’ (ii. 409). No trace of the missing eleven plays could be found among Huchel’s papers nor could details be ascertained despite a search through magazines listing radio schedules. Of the twenty-four remaining plays, twenty were actually broadcast. Typescripts of seventeen plays were located, details of seven others found in listings. Only four plays were actually printed in the Gesammelte Werke. The broadcasting details of these and of sixteen others were set out in the editorial apparatus, which also includes the titles of four other plays, for which typescripts exist but which were apparently not broadcast.
Doktor Faustens Teufelspakt und Höllenfahrt, first broadcast in December 1934, is one of the plays not presented in the Gesammelte Werke although it exists in typescript. Details given include the following: 'Der Text folgt fast wörtlich dem 1846 von Karl Simrock erstellten alten Puppenspiel sowie dem Geisselbrechtschen Puppenspiel Doktor Faust, oder: Der große Negromaniat, Schauspiel mit Gesang in fünf Aufzügen. Von einer eigenen, Bearbeitung kann nicht gesprochen werden'. (GW, ii. 410) The Mora library, however, contains a copy of Das Puppenspiel vom Doktor Faust, number 125 in the Insel-Bücherei. This copy was clearly used by Huchel during the process of adaptation. The editorial afterword, moreover, gives details of the sources used in the preparation of the edition, which certainly extend beyond those mentioned above. Equally interesting are the two volumes which Huchel used in his Daudet adaptation, Taten und Abenteuer des Löwenröters Tartarin von Tarascon, first broadcast in 1937 and preserved in typescript. One volume, produced by the Eichhorn-Verlag, Munich, and containing forty-seven illustrations by Emil Preetorius, is rich in annotations, while on the front cover there is a timetable for the completion of the play. The second volume, number forty-two in the Insel-Bücherei, reveals how Huchel went about his task: he pasted an extension on to all the pages, upon which he wrote dialogue.

Perhaps the most surprising discovery in the library, especially in the light of the statement in the Gesammelte Werke (ii. 409) regarding the search undertaken in magazines listing radio play broadcasts, is evidence of Huchel's adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's Die Greuel von Denshawai, an account contained in Siegfried Trebitsch's translation John Bulls andere Insel, published by Fischer in 1917. Shaw's anti-British attitudes were looked upon favourably in Nazi Germany, especially when, following the outbreak of war, a propaganda offensive was launched against Britain. In 1985, in his book Hörspiele im Dritten Reich, Wolfram Wessels pointed out that in 1940 two other Kolonne figures, Günter Eich and A.A. Kuhnert, contributed anti-British radio plays in this campaign. In 1989, in a study of Günter Eich's career in the Third Reich, Glenn R. Cuomo drew attention to the inclusion in the listings of a broadcast of 'Peter Huchel's Die Greuel von Denshawai (Danzig; 23 January 1940), a treatment of atrocities committed by British colonial forces against Egyptian peasants in 1906'. In a footnote Cuomo adds:

Nazi propagandists exploited Shaw's criticism of British imperialism and went so far as to publish Shaw's Die Greuel von Denshawai: Und andere britische Greuel (Leipzig: 1939).

17 Glenn R. Cuomo, Career at the Cost of Compromise: Günter Eich's Life and Work in the Years 1933-1945 (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1989), 63. I should like to thank Justus Fetscher, Berlin, for drawing to my attention Cuomo's discovery of the reference to Huchel's Die Greuel von Denshawai.
Luhe & Co., 1940) as volume 7 in their ‘England ohne Maske’ series. It is telling that this particular broadcast by Huchel is not included in the otherwise comprehensive listing of his radio plays appearing in the posthumous edition of his works.\(^{18}\)

Apparently, no typescript of *Die Greuel von Denshawai* has survived among Huchel’s papers. However, the many annotations in Huchel’s hand in the Fischer edition provide conclusive proof that he worked on this adaptation. Like Eich, Huchel, too, was prepared to produce work in line with propaganda requirements in the early war years, which after 1945 neither he nor the custodians of his work after his death wished to have brought to public attention. Yet if his adaptation of *Die Greuel von Denshawai* renders untenable the view that ‘There is not one letter, not one text which shows any pandering to National Socialist ideology’,\(^{19}\) then it must be said that it would be surprising if, in the circumstances, there were not evidence of some compromise. It would be similarly inaccurate to label Huchel a convinced Nazi propagandist on the basis of this work, even though unpublished correspondence from the war years contains further evidence of anti-British attitudes. Other available evidence points to an essentially non-Nazi position. Not least the selection of books in the library indicates that Huchel had little time for mainstream Nazi writing: of contemporary German writers actively promoted by the Nazis, the library contains only the names von Münchhausen, Wag-gerl and Weinheber. The anthology *Die neue Auslese: Stimmen unserer Dichter*, published in Berlin in 1941 by the Büchergilde Gutenberg, contains in the poem ‘Holunder’, composed in the mid-twenties, an example of the work that Huchel regarded as suitable for publication.

It would appear that Huchel was initially spared conscription because of his importance as a writer. Indeed, his willingness to produce the Shaw adaptation may be understood as an act designed to ingratiate himself so as to avoid military life. In June 1940, however, radio plays were removed from the war-time schedules, substantially curtailing Huchel’s opportunities and making him more readily dispensable. In August 1941 he was called up into the Luftwaffe, and from then until the end of the war he served in the flak, mostly near Berlin so that he could pursue literary projects in the capital. Unpublished correspondence from the war years refers to radio and film work. His letters reveal an understandable desire to avoid transfer to the Eastern Front. For a while he enjoyed life with his comrades in rural North German backwaters and in 1942 toyed with the idea of applying to join a propaganda company before hitting on the idea of applying for an officer-training course. He was accepted for training at Ludwigsburg near Stuttgart. It was from the Ossweil barracks (for-

\(^{18}\) ibid., footnote 75, 153–4.

merly the Karlsschule, where Schiller was educated) that on 19 September 1944 he sent to his wife Goethe’s *Maximen und Reflexionen* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1943) with the dedication ‘Für Dora in einsamen Nächten! Peter’. The following day he sent his wife a postcard of the Schillerhaus, Marbach am Neckar, and expressed his feeling of affinity with the young Schiller in his search for freedom, citing Schiller’s *In Tyrannis*. That during the war years he also looked to Goethe is further suggested by annotations in the two volumes of Goethe’s *Gedichte*, published in 1913 in Berlin by Morawe und Scheffelt. Among poems with annotations in the second volume are ‘Prometheus’, ‘Ganymed’ and ‘Das Göttliche’. Imagery from the beginning of ‘Das Göttliche’, ‘Edel sei der Mensch, / Hülfreich und gut’, is echoed in Huchel’s ‘Deutschland II’ (*GW*, i. 98) dated 1939, the second stanza of which reads

```
Göttlich bleibt der Mensch und versöhnt,
Und sein Atem wird frei wieder wehen,
Wenn auch die heulende Rotte höhnt,
sie wird vergehen.
```

It is not difficult to see in this poem, first published in 1948, a rejection of National Socialism. At some point in the later years of the war, possibly during his period in Ludwigsburg, Huchel – according to his first wife’s testimony – joined the anti-fascist organization, the *Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland*, set up in prisoner-of-war camps in the Soviet Union in 1943 following the German defeat at Stalingrad. This connection is of crucial importance for an understanding of how in the immediate post-war period Huchel could embark on a career in radio with the Soviets in Berlin, a career the orientation of which was in many respects at odds with his earlier development. Indeed, in the vastly changed circumstances following Hitler’s defeat key elements of Huchel’s earlier career were either suppressed or recast in terms acceptable in the new, predominantly socialist cultural environment. Unlike many of his new peer group, who in exile had taken part in the Realism Debate, he had no substantial grounding in socialist thinking in relation to the arts. The library contains evidence of how he sought to make good this deficiency. A German-language edition of Maya-kowsky’s *Ausgewählte Gedichte* published in Moscow in 1941 is of particular interest. Signed by Huchel, the text includes an introduction with a number of margin marks placed against key passages in the discussion of socialist views on poetry and the poet’s relationship to the social whole. It is highly unlikely that Huchel could have had access to the volume before 1945. As such, it is among the final texts to have been acquired by Huchel before he and his wife separated in 1946.

When Dora and Susanne Huchel moved to West Berlin in the late forties, they took the library with them. It was in the late seventies,
when Dora followed her daughter to Sweden, that the books found their way to Mora. Dora Huchel died in Mora in 1986.

In the present context it has been possible to offer only a brief, introductory assessment of the Huchel library. Clearly, much detailed work remains to be done with the texts, above all in charting Huchel's development as a poet, but also in extending our knowledge of his achievements as an author of radio plays. In this way, the library can help to shed light on a writer hitherto regarded as something of an enigma and on a period in German literary history about which our understanding is still extremely limited.
Fig. 1.
Peter Huchel (right) with a schoolfriend in Potsdam, probably early 1920s.
Peter Huchel, from a photograph taken in Kronstadt, Transylvania in 1930 just after his marriage to Dora Lassel
FIG. 3.
Dora Huchel (née Lassel), from a photograph taken in Kronstadt, Transylvania in 1930
FIG. 4. Peter and Dora Huchel with Alfred Kantorowicz (left) in the Brandenburg countryside, early 1930s.