
David Drew

Der Weg der Verheissung: Weill at the Crossroads

The first part of this essay was published in the September-October 1998 issue of Tempo, and was concerned with the origins and historical context of Kurt Weill's and Franz Werfel's Der Weg der Verheissung (The Path of The Promise) a musical drama (or near-opera) in four acts, presenting the Old Testament history of the Jewish people in a modern context.

Der Weg der Verheissung was written and composed in Europe in 1934-35, at the instigation of the American journalist, editor, and entrepreneur Meyer Weisgal (at that time a fervent Zionist). The only production to date of the English-language version entitled The Eternal Road was staged by Max Reinhardt at the Manhattan Opera House in New York in January 1937. Act IV, for which Werfel's original title was Propheten (Prophets), is based on The Book of Jeremiah, and is considerably darker in tone than the preceding acts. A few fragments of it survived in the Reinhardt production, but the protagonist himself and Act IV as such were suppressed. In a performing version by the present writer, the music of Propheten was heard for the first time in its entirety in May 1998 in Vienna. It was subsequently performed during the 1998 BBC Prom season at The Royal Albert Hall, and received its German premiere in November 1998 in Bochum.

The premiere of the first-ever staging of Der Weg der Verheissung (by Theater Chemnitz) is scheduled for 13 June 1999. It will be preceded by a 3-day symposium mounted by the University of Chemnitz; the present writer's paper for that symposium, 'Some Alternatives to Weill', forms an extended parenthesis between the concluding section of the first Tempo article ('Reinhardt and Werfel') and the following sequel to it.

According to Weisgal's detailed account of the origins of *The Eternal Road*, Reinhardt had no inkling of his plans until their November 1933 meeting in Paris. Weisgal began by outlining the idea of a biblical drama that would for the first time evoke the Old Testament in all its breadth rather than in isolated episodes. At the end of his account, according to Weisgal, Reinhardt sat motionless and in silence before saying – very simply –

'But who will be the author of this biblical play and who will write the music?'. 'You are the master', I said, 'it is up to you to select them'. Again there was a long uncomfortable pause and Reinhardt said that he would ask Franz Werfel and Kurt Weill to collaborate with him.

With or without prior notice, the problems

inherent in Weisgal's commission were so complex that Reinhardt would have had good reason for balking at them and every excuse for prevaricating. But it was not a time for prevarication; and Reinhardt was not the man for it.

Even so, the speed and decisiveness of his response seem extraordinary. The choice of Werfel offered a more than merely intelligent solution to an array of problems, each one of which might have defeated a lesser man. But every answer implicit in that choice gave rise to a new set of questions on the musical side.

Music was not a recreational diversion for Werfel, but a lifelong passion. It was also central to his life with Alma Mahler. Had he discovered some new Verdi in the early 1920s rather than merely dreamed of one, the *Verdi* novel he completed in 1924 would have had a different thrust, and his *Juarez und Maximilian* could have been framed as a conventional libretto rather than as the equally conventional historical play which Reinhardt immediately produced in Vienna and Berlin. In 1924 Werfel had in effect constructed several effigies of a composer yet to come. But only one of them, Verdi himself, corresponded to his own hopes.

By November 1933, Werfel was still without his new Verdi, and Reinhardt had lost all means of access to the not-so-old Old Master who, jointly with Hofmannsthal, had dedicated *Ariadne auf Naxos* to him 'in Verehrung und Dankbarkeit'. Either in the wake of Richard Strauss or aggressively positioned in front of him, almost every composer of any note whose name might have occurred to Reinhardt during that 'long uncomfortable silence' was disqualified on one ground or another. The outstanding exception was Weill.

Reinhardt and Weill

'I do not understand very much about music' declared Reinhardt in a letter of 1894, 'but nevertheless, or perhaps even for that very reason, I am very receptive to it'. He was then at the start of his career. Forty years later his understanding of music can only have increased in proportion to his practical experience of it. Since none of

that experience had involved him with the Second Viennese School, the apparently (though deceptively) anti-modernist tendency of Werfel's *Verdi* novel may well have struck a sympathetic chord.

Thirty years after Verdi's death, the Utopian-Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch had discerned 'ein Stück jüdischen Verdi' in Weill's *Die Bürgschaft* (1931-32). That 'bit of Jewish Verdi' had in fact already been evident in the *Mahagony* opera (1927-29); and it became even more pronounced in *Der Silbersee* (1932-33). Reinhardt had been actively interested in mounting the Berlin première of *Mahagony* at the Deutsches Theater in 1930; and *Der Silbersee* – whose miraculously frozen-over lake becomes at the close a mythic 'Weg der Verheissung' – was already announced and in rehearsal at the Deutsches Theatre when Reinhardt was dismissed in March 1933.

When Weisgal first visited him in November, Reinhardt was preparing his production of *Die Fledermaus* at the Théâtre Pigalle. Weill had been based in Paris for six months – either in hotels or at the Noailles residence – but had been abroad during the summer, trying to forget his troubles and recover from various psychosomatic ailments. Now returned, he had signed a three-year lease on a first-floor apartment in a simple house in the village of Louveciennes outside Paris.

Weill was still a figure to be reckoned with in the salons of Paris, though his reputation had lost some of its social glitter since the *succès d'estime* of the première in June of *The Seven Deadly Sins* (*Les sept péchés capitaux*). He was not alone in learning the hard lesson that a visiting celebrity is generally more welcome than a celebrated refugee.

Even without Weisgal's unexpected intervention, Weill would surely have heard from Reinhardt, or vice versa, towards the end of November 1933. On the 26th of that month Maurice Abravanel conducted an orchestral concert at which three songs from *Der Silbersee* were sung by Madeleine Grey – the soprano for whom Ravel had written his *Chansons hébraïques*, and a superb artist, as her too-few recordings testify. Just before the applause at the end of her performance, cries of 'Vive Hitler!' and catcalls directed at Weill were heard from the auditorium. The demonstration was led by the distinguished French composer Florent Schmitt.

Meyer Weisgal would have been the last to take fright at that news (which was widely reported in the Paris press). Indeed, it could well have helped allay some of his initial reservations about Reinhardt's choice of composer, chief of which, as he later admitted, was the false impression that

Weill was 'some sort of Communist'. The Broadway opening in April 1933 of an ill-fated production of *The Threepenny Opera* together with the publicity and gossip that preceded it and the reviews that followed, would have been quite sufficient to discourage Weisgal if Reinhardt had not had the good sense to insist that he have a talk with Weill before he left Paris in November. In his quiet way, Weill could be both persuasive and charming. With Weisgal he immediately forged a bond that remained unbroken – though it was sometimes severely tested – until his death.

Although Weisgal had given him a free hand, Reinhardt deserves credit for choosing Weill rather than one of several safer if less exciting alternatives (such as his friend and collaborator Erich Wolfgang Korngold, who had prepared the *Fledermaus* edition he was currently working with). As director of the Salzburg Festival and almost a native of Vienna – his birthplace had been in nearby Baden, but Vienna was where his education and career began – Reinhardt would have been fully aware of the political tensions in Austria, and their cultural ramifications, ever since the appointment of Dollfuss as Chancellor in 1932 and his subsequent establishment of a corporative state with clerico-fascist leanings. But was he sufficiently in touch with European and especially Viennese music-politics to make an accurate assessment of the risks entailed in bringing Weill and Werfel together, or even trying to do so? How far did he recognize and understand that such a collaboration would not only involve an unofficial but powerful third party in the person of Werfel's wife, Alma Mahler, but that it would acquire, through her, certain quite specific connotations – politically and socially, musically and aesthetically, and last but not least, spiritually, in the (by now) thoroughly politicized field of religion?

It was no secret – not even, in its bare essentials, from Meyer Weisgal, who was aware of the problem almost from the start – that Werfel had abandoned his Jewish faith during his adolescence in Prague, and had been tending towards Roman Catholicism well before he introduced himself to Alma Mahler in 1918 in the humble apparel of a worshipper at the shrine of Gustav Mahler. The fact that Mahler had converted to Catholicism in 1897, just a year before Schoenberg converted to Protestantism, should be seen in the light of Alma's claim that it was she who helped him become a *true* believer. It is clear from the two widely divergent versions of her memoirs – the first of which was the ghost-written American version of 1958, *And the Bride is Love* – that for some 25 years she spared no

effort in pursuing similar ends with Werfel. But the final step of baptism was one he never took.

Politically Alma Mahler tended towards the far right, though not of course to its racist extremes. Her eventual consent to marry Werfel after living with him, on and off, for ten years was conditional on his formally renouncing the utopian socialist residue from his brief espousal of revolutionary politics in post-World War I Vienna. Marriage in turn enabled her in 1929 to resume her confessional obligations as a Catholic.

Musically, Alma's utter devotion to the cause of Mahler, combined with her own slender but by no means negligible talents as a composer, inclined her to see Schoenberg as Mahler's natural successor and Alban Berg as another family-member. In such a circle there was no place reserved for the composer of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, however much such admirers and conductors of Weill as Zemlinsky and Fritz Stiedry might have wished it otherwise.

Of all that, Reinhardt can scarcely have had an inkling. Like most readers of Werfel's *Verdi* novel – including prominent Germanists of our own day – he no doubt saw Werfel as a fervent anti-modernist and anti-intellectual, drawn to Verdi's Italy (rather than Mussolini's) and dedicated to popularist ideals far removed from Schoenberg. But even before (or else immediately after) Werfel had completed in September 1934 his holograph text of *Der Weg der Verheissung*, he had written a passionate and noble tribute to Schoenberg, for publication by Universal Edition (Vienna), in their Festschrift *Arnold Schönberg zum 60. Geburtstag*. Praising Schoenberg for his 'exclusion of all secondary goals (effect, success, accessibility)', Werfel ends by calling his work a 'sublime dialogue that will be judged properly only by a period marked by a higher degree of spirituality than ours'.

Weill's early hopes of studying with Schoenberg, and Schoenberg's friendly response, had led, during the three years following Busoni's death, to a period in which his praise of Schoenberg and his music (in the columns of the official organ of Radio Berlin), was precisely consonant with Werfel's 60th birthday tribute. In 1927, Schoenberg (unsuccessfully) recommended Weill for membership of the Prussian Academy of Arts. But then came *Die Dreigroschenoper* and a flurry of provocative articles by Weill. When Schoenberg arrived in Paris in the spring of 1934, he was incensed to find that Weill was a local hero. To the American composer Virgil Thomson – according to Thomson's autobiography of 1967 – he had confided that of all the composers known to

him, Weill was the only one in whom he could discover no merit whatsoever.

Schoenberg and *Der biblische Weg*

At her first meeting with Werfel, in 1917, Alma Mahler heard him read aloud and 'very dramatically' the text of Schönberg's *Der Jakobsleiter*:

'Now,' he said after the first words, 'I know the entire conflict of this man. He is a Jew – the Jew who suffers from himself'.

In the summer of 1921 Schoenberg took his family to the Austrian resort of Mattsee, near Salzburg. Like all travellers and holiday-makers in those unsettled times, the Schoenbergs had first to fulfill the registration requirements. Unfortunately, Schoenberg had left his baptism papers behind. The official reaction was blunt: 'Juden sind unerwünscht' (Jews are not wanted). Deeply shocked, Schoenberg and his family left the resort at once.

The Mattsee incident was a turning-point: after 20 years of successful assimilation, Schoenberg had been jolted into a new awareness of his Jewish roots. Confirmed in that by a second provocation, Schoenberg in 1926 sketched three outlines for a 3-act play, *Der biblische Weg*. In the first outline the protagonist is clearly modelled on Herzl, but is identified by the letter M (for Moses?). In the second outline M has become Max Aruns, and has acquired a double personality – as visionary (Moses) and as activist (Aaron). Schoenberg completed the play in 1927 and the libretto of his opera *Moses und Aron* in 1928.

Much of *Moses und Aron* was composed and orchestrated during Schoenberg's Spanish retreat in 1931–32. In January 1933 he returned to his post in Berlin at the Prussian Academy of Arts. But soon after the Nazi seizure of power at the beginning of March there were warnings of a coming purge of 'Jewish influences' at the Academy. On 17 May Schoenberg left Berlin for Paris.

One of Schoenberg's earliest letters from Paris – dated 24 May 1933 – was addressed to Max Reinhardt. Schoenberg urged Reinhardt to read *Der biblische Weg* and exhorted him, at this time of crisis, to light a beacon for Jews throughout the world by staging the play wherever he could, whether in German, in English, in French. He assured Reinhardt that the play contained 'nothing, *absolutely nothing* that could offend *any government whatever*'.

Reinhardt's response, if any, is unknown. In another letter from Paris, dated 13 June 1933, Schoenberg described to the philosopher Jakob

Klatzkin his hopes of founding a 'new party' or a 'new sect' whose religious sense would be based on the 'Gedanken', the Idea, of the 'aussenvählten', the chosen, people, and whose programme would be 'national-chauvinistic on the highest level...militant, aggressive, opposed to any pacifism and all internationalism.'

Five weeks later, at a ceremony in the Union Libérale Israélite in Paris, Schoenberg formally declared his intention to 're-enter the community of Israel'. In September 1933 he was informed that his contract with the Prussian Academy of Arts was to be terminated with effect from 31 October 1933. Unable to find work in France, he accepted a providential invitation from Joseph Malkin to teach at his conservatory in Boston, and sailed for the USA on 25 October.

Before leaving France, Schoenberg had been busily soliciting support for his Jewish 'Unity' party. While recognizing the greatness of Herzl's vision, he had strong reservations about its practicality in modern conditions, and was at pains to dissociate himself from all forms of Zionism. Among the prominent Jews to whom he sent a letter of enquiry was Franz Werfel. Werfel replied by telegram, confirming that he too was actively interested in the 'Schicksal', the destiny, of the Jewish people.

Soon after the publication of Werfel's *Die Vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* – and therefore in the very period when *Der Weg der Verheissung* was taking shape – Schoenberg wrote again to Werfel (presumably from Boston, though the copy in the Schoenberg Institute has no heading or date). Reminding him that he, Schoenberg, has dedicated himself to the 'rescue of the Jewish people', he now informs him that his first step in that direction had been *Der biblische Weg*, and notes that his attempts to interest publishers and theatres in the play have been rejected 'without exception and emphatically'. (There is no mention of Reinhardt.)

Though stoutly defending the play and stressing its merits as a propaganda vehicle (*Tendenzstück*) Schoenberg admits that some of his 'figures' are two-dimensional, since their chief purpose is to be the 'messengers' of his ideas. While denying that his method is as cerebral as many might imagine, he grants that Werfel himself may find it off-putting. (Its roots in Expressionist theatre are not mentioned). From his own standpoint, however, he accepts that the purposes of propaganda might be fulfilled more easily and effectively were his key figures to be 'fleshed out' as characters. Since a gift for characterization is what he particularly admires about Werfel – so he tells him – he

proposes that they collaborate on a new version of *Der biblische Weg*.

With a warning that Werfel should not expect from him the kind of freedom that Verdi granted his librettists – surely a veiled but respectful reference to Werfel's own work on Verdi and his librettos – Schoenberg promises to send the text in 2–3 days.

There, or almost there, the story unsatisfactorily ends, at least as far as the authors and editor of a 460-page double issue of *The Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* were concerned four years ago.* It is left to Schoenberg to add an essential coda to his letter to Werfel:

Lastly, but certainly not incidentally, let me thank you for your marvellous Armenia-novel, which I got yesterday [...] and am reading with the greatest excitement.

Schoenberg, who never wastes a word and is never casual, means exactly what he says: his parting words are certainly not incidental, for their relevance to the matter in hand is as clear as the reasons for his great excitement. *Die Vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* was written at white heat during the 18 months preceding the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, and first published in Vienna in the early summer of 1933 (only a few months before Reinhardt's meeting with Weisgal in Paris). Ostensibly in the tradition of the historical novel, and minutely researched during the Werfels' tour of the Middle East, *The Forty Days* (as it was called in the version which took the English-speaking world by storm in 1934) was instrumental in publicizing for the first time the massacre of the Armenian people by the Turks in 1917 (an atrocity only recently in the news once again).

The Forty Days is in three parts or Books, of which the first – entitled 'Coming Events' – is a depiction and analysis of the racist and totalitarian mind so graphic and so astute that it can

* vol. XVII, numbers 1&2, June & November 1994, Los Angeles, 1995. Edited by Paul Zukofsky and copiously annotated and documented by Moshe Lazar and R. Wayne Shoaf, the double issue is entirely dedicated to *Der biblische Weg*. It was the principal source for the account of Schoenberg's drama which the present author contributed to the programme-book for the 1998 world première in Vienna of *Propheten*. In revising that account for the present occasion, the author has been much indebted to Alexander Ringer's important book, *Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Jew* (Oxford, 1990), which among other things drew his attention to Werfel's Schoenberg-tribute. It is Professor Ringer who – observing every nuance of the German word 'Weg' and of Schoenberg's highly characteristic and idiosyncratic reading of the Old Testament – translates Schoenberg's title as 'The Path of the Bible', as distinct from 'The Biblical Way' favoured by the Schoenberg Institute.

be read and clearly understood in terms of recent and present genocides everywhere, from the Balkans to the Middle East and far beyond. Although Werfel is already beginning to falter in Book Two ('The Struggle of the Weak'), 'Coming Events' is in itself a major achievement, and explains, even if it does not entirely excuse, Werfel's strenuous efforts to avoid antagonizing the Nazi authorities in 1933 and thus assure the circulation (not to mention the sales) of *Die vierzig Tage* in Germany. In that ultimately unsuccessful endeavour, he surely enjoyed the whole-hearted support of his wife. Whether she noticed in the kibbutz-like structures of Life on the Mountain (Book Two's first chapter) the almost unmistakable vestiges of millenarian communism is another question. Meanwhile, 'Coming Events' was more than enough for the author of *Der biblische Weg* and the composer of *Acompaniment to a Film Scene* to be going on with.

Estrangements

Weill's published correspondence with Lenya* sheds some light on his relationship with Werfel, but only at a relatively short range. In the period 1933-35, career-opportunities and questions of material survival tend to dominate both sides of the correspondence, irrespective of separation and divorce. So it is no surprise that Weill's first enthusiastic reference to what he has been calling 'the Bible thing' (der Bibel-Sache) concerns the royalty-deal he struck in Salzburg on 14 August 1934, and the substantial advance that is now to be negotiated. A week later, on his return to Louveciennes, he tells her that his 'worst fears' have come true – the complete book and lyrics for *Marie Galante* are waiting for him, and oblige him to begin composition at once, concurrently with making a start on 'the Bible thing'. *Marie Galante*, he tells her, looks promising – 'a big thriller (bombshell of a role!!!)'. A month later – on Sunday 23 September – Weill informs her of his intention to complete, by the end of the following week, not only the entire sketches for *Marie Galante* but also the sketches for the first two acts of 'the Bible thing' – respectively, 'The Patriarchs' and 'Moses'. He was as good as his word.

Quite different in tone is the progress-report Weill sent to Reinhardt on 6 October 1934. Between the opening remarks about his success in creating 'large-scale musical forms [...] without changing any text', and the closing ones

about the kind of singers he needs and the conductor he wants (Jascha Horenstein), comes the crucial passage:

Werfel has now sent me all four parts of the work. What he has done strikes me as splendid, above all in his successful knitting-together of this gigantic form. I am particularly and happily surprised about the conclusion of the piece. In its genuine naivety and simplicity, this vision of the Messiah attains true greatness, and all questions about the work's 'tendency' (*Tendenz*) are thereby answered, because the meaning of the entire work has thus been revealed.†

To write to Reinhardt in such a vein seems to have come naturally. To have written similarly to Lenya would have been to breach the long-respected boundaries of their correspondence. Moreover, Lenya – as an irretrievably lapsed Catholic, and proud of it – would have found it hard to take his enthusiasm seriously.

The strengths and weaknesses of the collaboration between Reinhardt, Weill, and Werfel were tested to the full during the period from September to December 1935, when the three men were together in New York preparing – or trying their best to do so in the face of ever greater obstacles – for the première of *The Eternal Road*. Weisgal's optimism was irrepressible, and that was perhaps the only reason why the Werfels waited until February before sailing for Europe and returning to the luxury of Alma's three homes – the villa at Breitenstein, the mansion in Vienna's Hohe Warte, and a small apartment elsewhere in Vienna.

During the summer of 1936 Werfel wrote *Höret die Stimme* (Hearken unto the Voice), a novel presenting his Jeremiah-figure in contemporary terms. With Weill he remained in touch by letter for another year or so. Whatever his grounds for deciding against attending the January 1937 opening of *The Eternal Road*, his fictional tribute to the biblical figure who had been struck from its cast-list suggests that his

†Author's translation. The Symonette-Kowalke version in *Speak Low* (op.cit., pp.144-5) significantly alters the sense by substituting the adjective 'tendentious' for the noun which is the obvious translation of *Tendenz*, and is therefore obliged to remove the diacritic marks which are part of the sense, as mere tendentiousness is not. 'Tendenzdichtung' has an honourable place in the history of literature and drama (Schiller, Ibsen, Wedekind, etc. etc.); and although by definition its main purpose is to propagate specific ideas relating to problems of politics, religion, or society (cf. Schoenberg's description of *Der biblische Weg* as 'ein Tendenzstück') its claim to be more than mere propaganda, that is, to have some intellectual and literary content, presupposes a certain imaginative and intellectual openness – not at all the same as being tendentious and perhaps covertly one-sided or reductionist.

* *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, edited and translated by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke, London, Berkeley, 1996.

lifelong friendship with Reinhardt was on this occasion better served by his absence than by his presence.

The Werfels returned to New York as refugees. Arriving by ship from Lisbon on 13 October 1940, they stayed for some ten weeks, but saw nothing of Weill, who was fully occupied with preparations for the Boston try-out of the show that would become his first American 'hit' – *Lady in the Dark*. On 30 December, the very day of the Boston opening, the Werfels arrived by car at their fine new home in Hollywood.

Four days later Werfel began to write a novel about St Bernadette of Lourdes. Though typically unsure that there would be any readership for the novel – or so Alma makes out – he was fulfilling, by the very act of making it his very first undertaking in America, a solemn vow uttered at Bernadette's shrine in Lourdes in the summer of 1940, when he and Alma were fleeing from the Germans and heading for the United States.

Published simultaneously in German and in English in 1941, *Das Lied von Bernadette* and *The Song of Bernadette* were overnight best-sellers in America, Britain, and the neutral countries of Europe. The Technicolor film version, released in December 1943, was a comparable box-office hit on both sides of the Atlantic, especially in predominantly Catholic countries as each was liberated by the Allies – beginning of course with France.

Between them, the novel and the film had appreciably changed the topography of the popular arts. Their success, and the marketing of it, were to influence publishers, producers, and writers for years to come; and even in our own very different times, they remain exemplary for all devotees of the immemorial alliance between religion, royalties, and the box-office.

Which is no excuse for dismissing Werfel's novel *a priori* as exploitative. In his next work, *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, Werfel reverts to his Jewish preoccupations, with encouragement from Reinhardt – a close neighbour in Beverly Hills, and one of the first friends with whom the Werfels were reunited when they moved to California. Subtitled 'the comedy of a tragedy' and recalling the Viennese tradition of *Nestroy*, the play (best known from its Hollywood version and its equally free British and American adaptations) deals with the very topics – race, expulsion and exile – that had linked *The Forty Days* to *Der Weg der Verheissung*.

Weill's first meeting with the Werfels since 1936 was at a social occasion in Hollywood in August 1944, when they were fellow-guests

of the actor Walter Slezak (son of the great Austrian-Czech tenor Leo Slezak). Next day, 21 August, Weill described the occasion to Lenya:

It was one of the worst gatherings of refugees I've ever gone to. A German language evening of the worst kind – because it wasn't even German but that awful mixture of Hungarian and Viennese. [...] The Werfels were very nice. Werfel is a sick man, and she is an old fool, but strangely warm and *herzlich* to me, and genuinely enthusiastic [sic] about *Lady in the Dark* which she saw twice.

'That sounds like a perfect party you attended at the Slezaks', replies Lenya, taking the bait and then dropping a morsel of her own:

I was more afraid for you to go to the Werfels on account of her. I thought she sure would be nasty to you. But I suppose, you are too successful, that stopped her.

Six days later Weill was back at the trough. According to the less than convincing account he gave to Lenya, Alma had called to invite him to an afternoon buffet, and he could think of no polite way of refusing –

You know my incapability to think of a lie in a case like that, so I went there. It was the most luxurious gathering I've ever seen, all poor refugees, drinking french Champagne (in the afternoon) and eating the best cold buffet imaginable with caviar of course. The language was entirely that mixture of Hungarian and Viennese which I like so much. Well, I talked to [Ludwig Bemelmans] for half an hour and left, leaving behind me a storm of indignation which I could still hear 10 blocks away.

'That Werfel party sounds ghastly', was Lenya's only comment. To that, however, she added a telling footnote: 'You see how important I am just to be around you and make up those quick lies on the phone'.

Truthfulness is not perhaps the outstanding characteristic of Weill's own communications at this time, but it is clear that preserving a power-base in Hollywood was at least an adjunct, and a vital one, to his Broadway career. In that sense, party-going was a necessity not a perk, and some 'ghastly' experiences were unavoidable. Alma had wisely excluded him from her High Culture parties – where the Schoenbergs were often the guests of honour, and the Thomas Manns occasionally; but now that the *Song of Bernadette* film had been released with such sensational success, there was a sporting chance that he might meet someone relevant to his own film plans. In any event, an afternoon buffet at the Werfels would surely have been less upsetting to him than an evening at the Brechts down in Santa Monica, where Hanns Eisler might be found quaffing

Californian wine and perhaps sharing some precious Beluga caviar with Lion Feuchtwanger, a lifelong Communist sympathizer, a distinguished rival and mortal foe of Werfel, and author of the anti-capitalist satire *Petroleuminsel* for which Weill had composed songs and incidental music in the year of *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

One would not guess from Weill's correspondence with Lenya that the Werfel he met in 1944 was the Werfel with whom he had set forth on *Der Weg der Verheissung* exactly ten years before. For Werfel, as Weill must have guessed or known, there was now little time left. He died a year later, aged 54.

In the summer of 1948 – a year after his visit to Palestine and soon after the foundation of the new State of Israel – Weill returned to Hollywood with his friend and collaborator Alan Jay Lerner. Their hopes of securing a film contract came to nothing, but the visit was not a waste of time. Having just attended the highly successful première in Bloomington, Indiana, of Weill's college-opera *Down in the Valley*, they discussed various ideas for another such opera, including one that would be based on the biblical Book of Ruth and incorporate music from the extensive Ruth-scene in *The Eternal Road*.

Posthumously rehabilitated in Weill's conscientious imagination, Werfel and *The Eternal Road* are part of the night-sky of the 'Musical Tragedy' *Lost in the Stars*, Weill's last contribution to Broadway and his last completed collaboration with his friend and neighbour, the playwright Maxwell Anderson. After its successful Broadway opening in October 1949, *Lost in the Stars* continued to play an important role in Weill's life and thoughts. Like Werfel in his posthumously published novel *Stem des Ungeborenen* (The Unborn Star, 1946), the Weill of *Lost in the Stars* struggles to reconcile nebulous hopes with realistic anxieties. In that respect he once again becomes instantly recognizable as the composer of *Der Weg der Verheissung*.

Among Weill's last public appearances – and one of which he wrote with understandable pride in a letter to his parents of 5 February 1950 – was at a ceremony in honour of Maxwell Anderson mounted by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. As the son of a Baptist minister, Anderson paid appropriate tribute to more than a decade of understanding, fellowship, and working partnership with Weill, the son of a Jewish cantor. He could hardly have found a simpler or more graceful way of circumventing the fact that he and Weill, to the best of his knowledge, were of one mind with regard to religious belief, and therefore in no

danger of quarrelling about doctrinal and other differences which sincere believers on both sides of the fence might still hold to be incompatible.

In his diary entry of 1 February 1950 Weill records that he had telephoned Gertrude Lawrence to tell her that he and Alan Lerner had decided to go ahead with their adaptation of the Book of Ruth. Just over two months later he died in a New York hospital. He was buried without religious rites at a cemetery overlooking the Hudson river at Haverstraw. The funeral oration was spoken by Maxwell Anderson.

Teleologies: (1) Atonement

Beginning with Abraham and the Covenant – The Promise in its primal state – and ending with Jeremiah and the destruction of the Second Temple in 586 BC, the biblical scenes in *Der Weg der Verheissung* are evoked from a timeless but clearly contemporary perspective of racial and religious persecution: a threatened community has sought refuge in its synagogue, and The Rabbi, who has tried to intercede with the authorities, has now returned from his apparently fruitless mission, and is reminding believers and sceptics alike of their ancient history by reading from the sacred Books and from the Torah scrolls. Beside him stands The Thirteen-Year-Old; below him, on the steps leading to his lectern, sits the boy's father, The Estranged One, who has long abandoned his faith but is now, under the influence of his (bar mitzvah) son, beginning to seek a 'Way' or a 'Path' back to it.

Contrary to Werfel's express wishes but with some initial support from Reinhardt, most of the biblical scenes and all the Rabbi's narratives were set to music, as were many of the collective and individual interjections from the 'contemporary' synagogue level. Weill's conception of the narratives as recitatives in the tradition of Bach's Evangelist is a development from the two chronicles of the Unknown Soldier in his *Berliner Requiem* (on poems by Brecht) and as such reflects lessons learnt from Busoni and his 'Sketch for a dramatic performance of Bach's St Matthew Passion'. Werfel's fears of 'liturgical monotony' if The Rabbi's readings were set to music must have owed something to unhappy memories of his Jewish upbringing in Prague, but were beside the point as far as his composer was concerned.

Reinhardt for his part was more in favour of the Bachian recitatives than of what Weill called his 'large-scale musical forms', few of which survived the depredations of the 1937 production. The ones that provided Reinhardt and his designer with opportunities for spectacular climactic effects fared best. In that respect the

finale of Part Three, 'The Kings', was a notable asset, both because of its critical position in Reinhardt's three-act form, and because of the stage pictures: the building and then the consecration of King Solomon's Temple, followed by the Night Watchman's fearful warning to the community, and the concluding reactions of The Rabbi, The Boy, and his estranged father.

The finale has three main sections. An F-minorish orchestral march (related in character to the finale of Weill's Second Symphony, but now with overtly Jewish modal inflexions) suggests the seven gruelling years of building-work. It leads, not without some modulatory discomfort, to a double chorus uniting the Biblical and the synagogue levels in the familiar words of Psalm 47 and the apparently unambiguous key of B flat major: 'Ye nations clap your hands... sing praises with trumpets and fire'. These jubilations are, however, called in question by a powerful modulation to D minor, which serves as the first warning of what is to come, and does so with such typically Weillian foresight that the redoubled energy with which the B-flat major rejoicings are resumed sounds like a struggle against some intractable force. In that context the culminating Alleluias in C major (!) would have as little to rely upon as the concluding C major of the Second Symphony, were it not for the off-stage trumpets and trombones proclaiming, *fortissimo*, the cyclic 'Promise' theme, whose origins go back to the very beginning of *Der Weg* – where the orchestra softly answers The Rabbi's opening recitative, 'And the Lord spake unto Abraham'.

At the thunderous knock on the synagogue door, the Biblical scenes of rejoicing are instantly blacked out, and the C-major Alleluias, already tinged by the minor, are replaced by the throbbing of a low E flat on the timpani. The Watchman has seen figures prowling outside, and calls for all lights to be extinguished. The President of the Community responds by urging everyone to find hiding-places in the roof-tops and the cellars. All comply, except for The Rabbi, The Thirteen-Year-Old and his father, The Estranged One. In the Epilogue, The Boy extends his hand towards his father, who ascends the steps and is already standing beside his son and The Rabbi as Part Three ends.

As an example of accompanied speech, or melodrama, the Epilogue reveals a strictly Austro-German ancestry. In more senses than one, it is a visionary moment: locally, it prepares for the question with which the Prophet Isaiah opens the music for *Propheten* – 'Watchman, what of the night?' – and hence for Jeremiah's baleful

reply and for Isaiah's E-flat major rejoinder, 'Comfort Ye, my people'. In a broader sense that was only beginning to be revealed in 1945, the visionary moment prefigures regions of human and inhuman experience that still today border on the indescribable. In these few pages of score, the author of *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* and the Weill of the Second Symphony reach an understanding wider and deeper than either can have been aware of.

The Epilogue is a ternary structure whose central section is a ruminative development of the B-flat major theme of the Psalm 47 chorus. Entrusted to two clarinets and then to solo oboe, the meditation begins in E-flat major and proceeds on its own melodic and tonal path. Partly because of the much slower tempo, and partly because of the key-colour and what becomes of it, the head-motif is audible in terms not only of the Psalm setting but also of quite another double chorus: the *Chorus mysticus* that concludes the Eighth Symphony of Gustav Mahler – specifically, the setting of 'Ewig! Ewig!' at rehearsal-figure 210.

It is not the only Mahlerian moment in the score, but it is the salient one, and it helps illumine the very different motif with which a solo cello initiates the Epilogue. Heard in the context of the entire score the motif is as mysterious as it is striking. Although it does not readily explain itself in terms of the overall thematic-motivic structure, there is something strangely and relevantly familiar about its first appearance: it is as if the cello's plunging line and the darkly apprehensive harmony were some half-forgotten memory for composer and listener alike.

It is only after the central transfiguration of the Psalm 47 melody that the cello-motif is revealed in a new and likewise transfiguring light. Without the kind of note-for-note resemblance that had pointed to Mahler's 'Ewig! Ewig!', the cello motif in both its original forms had been harking back to Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* – not to the main D minor theme, but to its most chromatically distraught variant (bars 202-210). Now recalled in tranquillity, it seems to be re-composing the final image of Richard Dehmel's poem: whether in the inward light of their own transfigured night ('durch hohe, helle Nacht', as Dehmel evokes it) or looking towards the unspeakable, The Rabbi, The Thirteen-Year-Old, and his no-longer estranged father, are as one; and the music is at one with them.

Can a passage that is unique in Weill's music of any period – though clearly situated in the area defined by *Der Silbersee*, the Symphony, and *The Seven Deadly Sins* – be adequately explained in

terms of a dramatic situation that was uniquely suggestive in itself and in its historical context? Or was there a more intimate relationship with Weill's own experience of exile in the European winter of 1934-35?

With Mahler clearly identifiable in the foreground of the Epilogue and Schoenberg becoming dimly visible as he approaches from the far distance – like Jeremiah at the start of *Propheten* – Weill has in effect duplicated the Father-Son-Rabbi tableau in the form of a shadow-play in which he could replay the role of The Estranged One returning to the fold in a newly awakened sense of his heritage and responsibilities as a Jew.

But it was only an Epilogue; and as such it was also the prologue to Jeremiah's prophecies and their fulfilment. At the time of composition, Weill's parents were still living in Leipzig, where his father, the former Cantor in Dessau, was Warden of the B'nai B'rith orphanage. No sooner had Weill reached an agreement with Weisgal, Reinhardt and Werfel than he wrote to his father outlining the project and asking whether he might borrow from him any material relating to music for Jewish worship – traditional music, he emphasized, rather than 19th- or 20th-century adaptations. Given the great quantities of such music available to him at the National Library in Paris – which he duly consulted – and considering how many traditional Jewish melodies he was able to jot down from memory (to his own surprise, according to a contemporary interview), it is clear that the request to his father was more in the nature of a gesture of family fellowship than the reflection of practical need.

It was to his father that Weill dedicated the only publication in his lifetime of any music from *The Eternal Road* – a 14-page album containing six numbers arranged and simplified by Chappell (New York) for mass consumption. But that dedication is a mere token of what is conveyed by the work itself and particularly by the tone and substance of The Rabbi's accompanied recitatives. Brief though they are, these 'readings' (as Werfel calls them) from the scriptures provide the entire score with the only individual contributions that are consistent in tone, substance, and workmanship. To attribute this consistency to a pious regard for sacred texts would be to overlook other scriptural passages where The Rabbi is not the intermediary, and the candle-smoke becomes disturbingly redolent of Marie Galante and her world.

The Rabbi's last words are, in their musical setting, the consummation of all that is most personal and inward in his role: 'A voice is heard

in Ramah....Rachel weeping for her children'. With that, The Rabbi closes the Book of Jeremiah and covers his head with a prayer-shawl as The Voice of Rachel pleads for the children of Israel to the strains of 'Eli Tziyon', the melody traditionally used on the Ninth Day of Av in commemoration of the destruction of the two Temples.

Transgressions and Disguises

'And King Saul put on disguise' (Da verummte sich Saul). Only in this one instance do The Rabbi's *recitativo* readings lead directly into an aria-like structure in the same mode. The scene of Saul, Samuel, and the Witch of Endor is a sombre ritual that prepares for the likewise trinitarian Epilogue to Part III: it too is in the nature of an aria for orchestra (with sung as well as spoken words, though the vocal lines are mere embellishments).

Although the music is immediately comprehensible as a prophecy of the imminent death of Saul and his house, it amounts to much more than that in the context of *Die Bürgschaft*, the 3-act opera which, as Weill himself acknowledged, is the direct precursor of *Der Weg der Verheissung*. For this is a music whose discriminations and judgements are as Solomonic and as Gandhian as those of the Judge in *Die Bürgschaft*. Its classicism is not neo-classicism, and if at one point it overlaps with the youthful Mendelssohn, it does so while scrupulously avoiding all suggestion of Weber and his Wolf's Glen (one of Weill's most admired episodes in an opera that had been a favourite since his early adolescence).

The sons of Saul are slain by the Philistines, Saul falls on his own sword, and David mourns for Jonathan in a Hebraicized G minor before falling for Bathsheba and arranging for the death of her husband in a letter-song based on the same ostinato-rhythm as the Lust movement (Unzucht) in *Die sieben Todsünden* – a collocation continued and developed later in the scene. The same scene has the Avenging Angel singing in the accents of the Vengeance Aria in *Der Silbersee*; and just before the climax, The Rabbi is drawn into the network of allusions to *Die Bürgschaft*, though not for any communicable purpose.

The pressures of time under which Weill composed *Der Weg der Verheissung* had begun to leave traces at quite an early stage in Part I, 'The Patriarchs'. Since then, their intermittent but cumulative effects have been twofold: the over-reliance on routine ostinatos and sequences; and frequent recourse to Weill's own recent work in order to extract material for re-processing in harmonically and melodically more conventional

terms. There was indeed a certain ironic justice in reverting to the upside-down Papal catalogue of *The Seven Deadly Sins* and ostentatiously displaying it the right way up. Predictably, however, the musical and artistic benefits of that simple strategy tend to be disproportionate to the more obvious advantages of beating the clock.

Fortunately, the Saul-Samuel scene has in effect put paid to most of these practices by indicating the craggy path that will lead to *Propheten* by the way of David's climactic outcry of repentance and supplication:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
...Conceived in sin, born in iniquity, redeem me and
cleans me.

These are his last words. In Weill's exceptionally powerful setting (but not in Werfel's published text of 1935) they are repeated, *fortissimo*, by the entire Jewish community in the synagogue; and they are sung to the most widely known of the traditional and liturgical melodies Weill has drawn upon – the Kol Nidre, the melody traditionally reserved for the most solemn hour in the Jewish sacred calendar, the Eve of Yom Kippur.*

Teleologies (2): The Messiah and The End of Time

The all-explaining 'Tendenz' that Weill discovered and was enthralled by when he received the final pages of Werfel's text was Christian, not Jewish. The Jehovah of old – the vengeful tribal god, the wrathful and implacable judge of his own backsliding people – has been replaced by the New Testament version, the God of love and mercy, whose Only Son is The Way to everlasting life. Werfel's Jeremiah, as self-declared 'man of peace', already prefigures the Redeemer. It is he who defends the poor against the rich and denounces worldly vanities, he who scatters with his stick the idol-sellers' wares, he above all who is persecuted, stoned, and imprisoned for preaching the gospel of peace and humility. Opposed to Jeremiah is the false prophet Chananjah (Hananiah), who has been re-cast by Werfel as a modern Pharisee, a smooth-talking demagogue and flatterer who shamelessly talks of peace while planning war.

Characteristically, Werfel has produced a schizoid Jeremiah, enlightened by the New Testament yet anguished by the Old. Still bearing the Jahwist yoke, he is and remains the prophet

of doom (and as such, a figure deeply inimical to *The Eternal Road* of 1937). But in his quasi-apostolic guise, he already has the answer to Rachel's prayer for her children, and knows how the night-long and solitary vigil of The Thirteen-Year-Old will be rewarded at first light by the answer to his question about the coming Messiah.

The figure and countenance of the Messiah as revealed to the boy in his vision are non-corporeal, 'as if made from light'. Yet the 'huge crown' he is seen to be holding seems to confirm that the figure is indeed Christ Risen in Majesty.

At the foot of Werfel's holograph of *Der Weg*, after the address (Alma Mahler's villa at Breitenstein) and the date (14.9.34), are the initials familiar from Catholic iconography since mediaeval times: D.G. (Deo gratias).

A propos of *Der biblische Weg* Schoenberg had always insisted on the need to enlist the enthusiastic support of non-Jews; but that was a political not a religious objective. Since Meyer Weisgal's comparable if dissimilar objectives were hardly to be achieved at the cost of losing Jewish support, Werfel's messianic vision was, to say the least, provocative. Werfel was duly persuaded to think again, and responded with an intelligent compromise to which, presumably, Alma Mahler gave her blessing. The first edition of his text (with Weill's name discreetly omitted) was published in Vienna in 1935.† In place of 'Der Messiah' there now appears 'Der Engel der Endzeit', 'The Angel of the End of Time' – a figure derived from the New Testament's most profoundly Semitic book, *The Revelation of St John the Divine*.

And the angel which I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven. And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever [...] that there should be time no longer. (*Revelation X*, 5-6)

This is a far cry from the Messiah of the New Testament as originally imagined by Werfel, but not from *Revelation XXI*, where a new Jerusalem descends 'out of heaven from God, Having the Glory of God'. And that New Jerusalem

had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, [...] and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

In each of Weill's holographs – and also in the processed vocal score used for rehearsals in New York – the aria of the visionary figure is still attributed to the 'Voice of the Messiah';

* See Ringer op.cit., pp.75-81, for an invaluable discussion of the melody, its historical origins, and the uses Schoenberg made of it in his work of the same name and in other works, notably the Fourth Quartet.

† *Der Weg/der Verheissung/ein Bibelspiel/von/Franz Werfel* (Vienna, 1935).

and that is how he has tried to compose it, but strictly from the standpoint of The Thirteen-Year-Old.

In its essentials, though not in its effect nor in the demands it makes on the tenor soloist, the aria aspires to a childlike simplicity. The incipit describes an ascending C-major scale, and apart from a brief turn to the flat submediant, the entire melody remains true to its diatonic premisses. Harp and strings provide an equally simple accompaniment, while the woodwind outline a plangent counter-melody, above which organ and vibraphone are slowly and for the last time proclaiming the cyclic theme of The Promise.

In the context of *Propheten* and its unmistakable references to the discontents and sicknesses of the 20th century, Weill's attempt to capture a timeless and universal truth, and to do so in terms that a Thirteen-Year-Old of his own day would easily have grasped, has more dignity and integrity than a hypercritical listener of today is likely to grant. To cite in Weill's defence the Mahler of the *Wunderhorn* years (especially the child's view of heaven that informs the finale of his Fourth Symphony) would at best be a naivety of its own. At this late moment in *Propheten*, the music and its essential melos have made their escape from all things German, indeed, from every latitude and longitude. Even the populist oleography of the scoring serves to remove national traits.

Yet the aria does have a precise location. It is Sulzer's and Lewandowsky's 1830 version of *Omnom Kein* – the Response for the Eve of Atonement. In Weill's version only the incipit and its immediate consequences are used, and even they are simplified, not without losing the specifically Jewish characteristics. In the aria's central span Weill temporarily abandons *Omnom Kein* and its hidden meanings – 'it is truly so that the evil imagination predominates within us' – in order to return to the *Kol Nidre* and his own coda to it. While Werfel's 'Messiah' is advocating the grateful acceptance of suffering(!) Weill's is reminding the attentive listener of the *Kol Nidre* and his own impassioned continuation of the traditional melody (by way of underlining David's final and unequivocal repentance).

Teleologies (3): The March to Zion

As the angelic or messianic vision fades, the modal figure first heard in the opening bars of *Der Weg der Verheissung* – where The Rabbi, in recitative, introduces the message of God to Abraham – is recalled by unison horns in the shofar-like form it had acquired later in that scene. The Thirteen-Year-Old wakens the

sleepers huddled in the synagogue, and as he begins to tell them of his vision, the music originally associated with Abraham and the Covenant is recalled on the strings. Another shofar-call impassively announces the arrival of a Royal Messenger bearing the reply to The Rabbi's petition: The King (of wherever) has decreed that the Jewish community, on pain of death, must leave the occupied zone of the city before sundown.

Like Schoenberg during the same period, and not for altogether dissimilar reasons, Werfel is disinclined to offend the authorities in Europe's largest German-speaking territory. The mythologized King and the hint of purely military expediency seem strangely incompatible with the contemporary realities and prospects so clearly discerned in the Epilogue to Part III and so vividly prefigured by the 'sounds of breathless terror, of panting, of moaning cries' which are heard off-stage at the very start of *Der Weg*, even before the dramatic action is initiated by the Prologue in the synagogue. By formulating the royal proclamation in relatively harmless terms, Werfel provides himself with an alibi while theoretically leaving the spectator in full charge of the message already delivered in the Part III Epilogue. But what now? And what has Weill to say about it?

To the antecedent phrase of the Covenant-music which had already ignored the arrival of The King's Messenger, the tonally symmetrical consequent is now added, as if the King's demand were superfluous. The quietist implications are clear: it is not from this nameless king that a significant message has come; nor is it in the unoccupied zone of the troubled city or the pastures beyond that the true peaceable kingdom is to be found. With Goethe once again, 'Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis...'

Perhaps without meaning to and certainly without any Mahlerian pretensions, Weill has set the musical stage for another *Chorus mysticus* (to which the only convincing alternative would be a Purgatorio and Rondo burlesca, in the manner of the second and third movements of his Second Symphony). For just such a chorus, he already had a clear musical precedent in the 8-part choral setting of the Almighty's command to Moses after he has abandoned his people and ascended the heights, leaving Aaron desolate and afraid – afraid of 'vengeance' – while the Golden Image is being fashioned. On the heights above, Moses is shown the 'radiant prototypes in eternity' of the sacred objects in the Ark of the Covenant, and is then commanded – and this is where the 8-part chorus begins – to take the

Tables of the Law and descend to his people, who are already worshipping and orgiastically celebrating the God of Gold.

A corresponding *ascent* from nadir to Zenith is not only conceivable after the intervention of The King's Messenger, but is latent in Werfel's concluding stage-picture. Immediately after the departure of The Messenger, two great processions begin to ascend The Path of The Promise: the first comprises all the Biblical figures and supernumeraries, and is led by the arch-father Abraham, whose gaze is fixed on the great stairway that forms the Fifth Stage – the stair to Heaven and the sphere of the angels and The Voice of God; the second begins on the ground-level of the synagogue and its 'timeless' community, and is led by The Rabbi onto the Path that curves up to the Biblical stages. At the head of the great stairway forming Stage Five appears once again the lucent figure of The Messiah (or Der Engel der Endzeit). His arms are outstretched towards Abraham's; but 'before the meeting takes place', Werfel declares, 'the scene fades into darkness and the play ENDS'.

The vision is Werfel's, but the appropriate 'chorus mysticus' has in effect been ruled out by Meyer Weisgal's Zionist objectives and by the text of Psalm 126 which becomes their emblem and justification. To end *Der Weg der Verheissung* with a rousing choral setting of that psalm, and to prepare for the event as early as the opening scene, must have been among the main points of agreement confirmed at the Venice and Salzburg meetings in the first half of 1934. Weill began sketching 'The Patriarchs' in September, and within two or three days must have reached the point in the text where Abraham and Sara are instructed by the Almighty to leave their native land and proceed with their entire household to Canaan. As their caravan sets forth and The Rabbi continues his narration, the orchestra adumbrates the C major *alla marcia* which at this juncture could be mistaken for mere stage-music.

In 'Moses', however, the march returns in a brief but euphoric choral setting which serves as the introductory refrain of a 'March to Zion' whose extended and more meditative trio section (notable for its tango-like undertones) is destined to become the epitaph of Moses as he dies without setting foot in the Promised Land. In Part III there is only the remotest echo of the March; and in Part IV, the prophecies of Jeremiah, together with their cataclysmic fulfilment in the destruction of the Temple and the captivity of the blinded king and his people, seem to have banished all thought of the March to Zion, as far as Weill's music is concerned.

And no wonder. The 'Tendenz' which had so seized his imagination when he received the final pages from Werfel during the latter half of September 1934 was not, of course, the Zionist one (which he had known about all along). Neither in the passions and the anguish of *Propheten*, nor even in the messianic C major which answers the supplications of Rachel and the question and prayer of The Thirteen-Year-Old, does he give any warning of what will happen when the two processions begin their ascent: eight bars of the sprightly caravan music as the processions assemble, a 16-bar choral setting of Psalm 126 (all six verses) based on the lusty refrain of the March to Zion, and a nine-bar orchestral coda ending fortissimo in C major. 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion' sang the psalmist, 'we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing...'

In Weill's blithely triumphalist setting, there is no time for them that dream, no time even for the wide-awake Thirteen-Year-Old. Only perhaps in the insistent major-minor false-relations preceding the final cadence is there perhaps the hint of a doubt about the propriety of such a statement in this profoundly hazardous and uncertain context.

Including the extended trio which is reserved for Moses in Part II, the 'March to Zion' would have been ideal for the purposes of *The Romance of a People*, the vast open-air pageant of Jewish history which Weisgal had presented at the Chicago Worlds Fair in May 1933. Almost exactly ten years after that sensationally successful event, the March to Zion was heard again in *We will Never Die*, a pageant first staged at Madison Square Gardens and sponsored by the Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews. The author of the text was the playwright, journalist, and militant activist, Ben Hecht, with whom Weill was closely involved during the war years. Subtitled 'A Memorial – Dedicated to the Two Million Jewish Dead of Europe', *We Will Never Die* was an expression of outrage, and perhaps the first of its kind anywhere; but its ultimate purpose, like that of the March of Zion, was purely propagandist.

The final appearance of the March in Weill's lifetime – or so the evidence suggests – was in August 1946 in *A Flag is Born*, a pageant commissioned from Hecht by the American League for a Free Palestine. Furnished with at least fourteen passages of incidental music, mostly by Weill and partly from *The Eternal Road*, the pageant boasted the subtitle 'Palestine is Ours'.

When all is said and done, and every reason-

able explanation or excuse weighed in the balance, it is hard to resist the conclusion that *The Eternal Road* was almost fatally flawed from the start. The very title which had been wished upon the English-language version of *Der Weg der Verheissung* was a technicolor folly worse than any in Hollywood's *Song of Bernadette*. Was no one in Reinhardt's production team aware, or did no one care, that 'The eternal road' was an image favoured by Germany's new leadership, and especially by the Propaganda Minister, for whom 'Der ewige Weg des Nationalsozialismus' was not only a foregone conclusion but also part of the daily round of speech-making and leader-writing?

In his letter to Lenya of 4 June 1947, written from Geneva after his first and only visit to Palestine, Weill mentions the 'huge ovation' he had received from the Palestine Orchestra (soon to become the Israel Philharmonic), and also a 'short and painless' reception for him given by the Mayor of Tel-Aviv, a city which he describes as 'very ugly with a Jewish-fascist population that makes you vomit'.^{*} His vehemence is revealing, and not only in the immediate context of his private meeting with Chaim Weizmann.

That meeting had been arranged for him by Meyer Weisgal, who only a few months earlier had severed his last links with Zionism and the Jewish Agency, in disgust at the backstage intrigues against Weizmann. How moved Weill had been by the meeting with Weizmann is something to which his correspondence, and not only with Lenya, testifies. But there is a deeper expression of personal emotion in the orchestral arrangement of the *Hatikvah* which he composed later that year for performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in conjunction with a Testimonial Dinner in Weizmann's honour. Six months later, the new State of Israel was proclaimed, and Weizmann was named its first President. Predictably, the *Hatikvah* was chosen as the national anthem; but instead of anticipating that predictable choice, Weill's disquieting arrangement is the nearest he ever came to a critique of his own *March to Zion*.

The present writer's decision to preface his 1998 performing edition of *Propheten* with Weill's *Hatikvah* was inseparable from the more complex but equally onerous decisions relating to the formal and musico-dramatic consequences of the Royal Messenger's intervention. All other considerations aside, a 16-bar reprise of the cyclic *March to Zion* would have been

structurally egregious and musically inane. The 4-act structure of the score 'begins' (without prelude or introduction) in G and 'ends' (without closure) in the C major of the Covenant-music; but *Propheten* as a self-standing entity beginning in Dorian E is structurally incompatible with an open end followed by a 34-bar *March* which – apart from its frankly propagandist purpose – is a minuscule Grand Finale-cum-curtain-call for the entire cast of *Der Weg*.

The performing version of *Propheten* therefore omits the *March to Zion* and replaces it with the tripartite structure of Interlude, Double Chorus, and Epilogue which closes 'The Kings'. As for beginning this version with the orchestral *Hatikvah*, the dramatic and historical relevance of Weill's arrangement would be insufficient justification were it not for the musical connexions. Echoes of the Walt Whitman settings of 1942 and anticipations of the 'Cry, the Beloved Country' lament of 1949 are secondary in importance compared to the sub-thematic and motivic links. The arrangement does not begin with the traditional melody of the *Hatikvah*, but with Weill's own counter-theme, presented at the start in parallel triads. The incipit, including the dactylic rhythm, replicates in the same modality (Dorian on E) but in diminution and in higher octaves (woodwind and second violins) the similarly descending scale of the opening phrase of *Propheten* – Isaiah the Prophet's question to the unseen watchman, 'Wächter, wie weit in der Nacht schon?'. The same motif, again underlined in parallel fifths (rather than triads), had accompanied Jeremiah's first prophecy of woe. Isaiah's retort, 'Comfort Ye, My People', begins with the same motif in the major, and continues with a refrain based on its inversion – none other than Weill's adaptation of 'Omnom Kein', here associated with Isaiah's vision of a peace-loving Israel admired and emulated by 'all nations'.

If this was *The Hope*, 'Ha'tikvah', of Chaim Weizmann and indeed of his friend and private secretary Meyer Weisgal, and countless others, in New York and Washington in November 1947, the realities of the time – like those of our own time – gave every sign that that fulfilment of *The Hope* would be long deferred. That, indeed, is the sense of Weill's arrangement, not least in the central section, where the dactylic rhythm of the opening is transferred to a two-note ostinato in the bass. Although that particular ostinato, and other similar ones, have been Weill's favourite trope for dangerous and war-like situations ever since *Die Bürgschaft*, he can hardly have forgotten its role in the central scene in *Propheten*,

^{*} See *Tempo* 206, September 1998, p.19.

where Jerusalem is besieged, and Jeremiah is attacked by the crowd and denounced and imprisoned by the war-mongering Chananjah. Given his lifelong fondness for contrapuntal inversions and major-minor transformation, the composer of *Hatikvah* was clearly recalling the dialectical relationships between Jeremiah and Isaiah at the start of *Propheten* and the Vision of the Messiah at the close. Only in the light of that dialectic – and its links (via 'Omnom Kein') with the liturgy of the Eve of Atonement – are the last two bars of Weill's *Hatikvah* comprehensible as something more than a pardonable concession to the mood of a testimonial dinner for Weizmann. The final Picardy third (with obligatory cymbal clash) would be a hollow triumph indeed for Weill's sharply formulated perception that the incipit of 'Omnom Kein' (in his version) was always latent in that of the *Hatikvah*'s folk-tune, and vice versa. By cleaving to the minor mode until the penultimate bar, the *Hatikvah* of 1947 finally supplants the March to Zion, and restores Jeremiah to his rightful place opposite Isaiah.

Loyalties: Ruth and Naomi contra Polly and Macheath

'MELODIE, MELODIE, MELODIE' – that had been Werfel's triplicated demand to Weill when he wrote to him from Breitenstein on 15 September 1934 enclosing the final scenes of *Der Weg der Verheissung*. Not anticipating the electrifying effect of the final childlike vision of The Messiah, and certainly not bargaining for through-composed structures (or for individual recitatives, arias and ensembles where none was specified), Werfel was perhaps thinking of a score in the tradition of Weill's first composition teacher, Humperdinck – the Humperdinck of *Königskinder* and Reinhardt's *The Miracle*. Weill had other ideas from the start; and at least some of them appealed to Reinhardt.

But Reinhardt for his part had requirements strictly of his own. One of them concerned the actress Helena Thimig, his non-Jewish partner during the recent years of a marriage now dissolved. Like Werfel, who for many years had lived with the Gentile to whom he was now married, and like Weill, who had remained outwardly unperturbed by his recent divorce from Lenya, Reinhardt had a personal as well as a political and philanthropic interest in the extended scene with which Werfel had begun 'The Kings' (Part III). For in that scene the ancestry of King David is traced back to the Moabite Ruth – by strict definition, a Gentile, and certainly an alien in the eyes of the Israelites

of the time. The story is archetypal, its figures universal. Naomi is the widow of Elimelech of Bethlehem, who had taken her to the neighbouring land of Moab, together with their two sons. Both sons marry Moabites, one of whom is Ruth. After ten years, Moab is stricken by drought and famine, and both sons die. Naomi resolves to return to Bethlehem, and Ruth, unlike her sister-in-law, insists on accompanying her: 'Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God'.

For the European and American publics, and particularly for the public in Germany that Werfel was thinking of (and that Schoenberg was still hoping to reach with *Der biblische Weg*) the moral, and the inter-racial politics, of the Book of Ruth were wholly apposite. For Reinhardt, Werfel's Ruth was a role made for Helene Thimig; and for Weill, the directorial imperatives would entail the familiar discipline of writing for a singing actor rather than a trained singer.

From Werfel's and Reinhardt's point of view, the Ruth scene was a playlet within a play; from Weill's it was a miniature biblical opera with an important social theme, and as such, a successor to one of the many projects left behind in Germany – *Naboths Weinberg* (Naboth's Vineyard), a school-opera planned with Caspar Neher in 1932. Last and probably least, but by no means insignificantly, the Ruth scene was for Weill a means of qualifying the calculated blasphemy of Brecht's allusion to Ruth's pledge ('Whither thou goest...; etc) in the Polly-Macheath 'Love Scene' in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, without suggesting any reason or desire to repudiate it.

As a natural enemy of Brecht and his circle, and the butt of his own onetime supporter Karl Kraus, Werfel could hardly have introduced, in all seriousness, a Royal Messenger at the end of *Der Weg der Verheissung* without at the same time hoping to get his own back. Whereas Brecht's playful gloss on John Gay had heightened the deliberate absurdity of Gay's Happy End, Werfel's wholly serious gloss on Gay and Brecht produces, with the aid of Psalm 126, a Zionist End that he himself was not party to, and that Weill, already confused by his parents' immigration to Palestine, was unable or unwilling to dwell upon.

Predictably enough it is the Ruth scene that exposes the fundamental dichotomies reflected in *Der Weg der Verheissung*: those which had existed or developed in the minds of its two authors, and those inherent in the cultural history of the first half of the 20th century.

but/

Alban Berg's posthumous Violin Concerto of 1935 and Werfel's *Das Lied von Bernadette* of 1941 – his first work in America – were dedicated to the memory of the same 19-year-old girl: Manon Gropius, Alma Mahler's daughter by her second marriage. Within 20 years of its première – at least half of which were lost because of world events – the Berg concerto had established itself in the 20th-century repertory and in popular esteem. By then *The Song of Bernadette* had topped the best-seller lists everywhere, made fortunes for many, and quietly faded from view, unbruised by the scorn heaped on it by intellectuals of every hue. As late as 1965, even so distinguished an advocate of Werfel as Walter Sokel felt obliged to preface his defence of the novel by remarking that in the first year of publication 'millions of shopgirls from Zurich to California had rejoiced over it'.*

Even if Werfel himself had scarcely dreamed of such a readership, it was implicit in his religious and social thinking that what he had to say should reach the widest possible public. There at least Weill was entirely at one with him; and even the Berg of the Violin Concerto might not have demurred. The difference was not so much between Werfel's public and Berg's, as between Berg's and Schoenberg's.

Thanks to the practical exigencies and to Reinhardt's close personal involvement, the scene of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz epitomizes many of the problems and some of the musical objectives of the first three Acts or Parts of *Der Weg der Verheissung*. The struggle between Moses and The Angel of Death had inspired the darkest and most intense music yet, and Reinhardt – who was later to extract from Weill a more popular replacement for the finely imagined Rachel-Jacob duet in Act I – would have had cause to recommend beginning Part III in a more popular style even had Thimig's involvement not been an issue. Weill took his cue for the Ruth scene from the roughly comparable elopement-scene, 'Der Mädchenraub', which he had recently composed for the operetta *Der Kuhhandel*. But the Caribbean setting and primitive rural milieu of the operetta introduced social and erotic tensions and ritual undercurrents which were more conducive to Weill's invention than the respectable marriage of Ruth into high-bourgeois society. Unlike the music of the operetta scene, that of the Ruth scene is linguistically at odds with itself. The C minor tango with which it opens has a strong Jewish accent that does not disguise a debt to Bach's great G minor fugue in the second

book of the 48 – specifically to the counter subject and what becomes of it in the later episodes. Although this subterranean intrusion from the Busoni years is a recurrent feature of the rondo form and is eventually resolved by the concluding fugal stretto (not however on the main subject) it is yoked to a *molto espressivo* refrain in G major (with tints of the minor) that hails from a very different world, as do all the lyrical major-mode episodes that follow.

The lyrical refrain is first sung by Ruth to the words of her solemn pledge, 'Whither thou goest, I will go'. In spirit (for it is by no means without spirit) the refrain and its harmony are already travelling-companions for Reinhardt on his missions to Hollywood; and indeed it was in Hollywood in 1937 that Weill sketched a foxtrot version of the refrain for his Fritz Lang film *You and Me*. It was not used. But the original scene, as already noted, retained its hold on Weill's imagination until the last weeks of his life, when he was actively planning a college opera on the Ruth material with Alan Jay Lerner as his librettist and *Down in the Valley* as its forerunner.

Weill knew exactly what he was doing when he couched the pledge-refrain in a different musical language from that of the C minor tango, for it is Ruth's answer, on their safe arrival in Israel, to Naomi's considerate but heavy-hearted advice that she should now return to Moab where she is free to worship the God of her own people. In her loyal reply, the V-minor relationship to which the Weill of former times might instinctively have resorted is only a vestigial colouring for an otherwise outspokenly old-fashioned affirmation of the dominant and its moral order.

Ruth's readiness to worship the God of a 'foreign' people, as if in recognition that historically it is the same God as hers, was theologically important for Werfel, and at least in theory a link between him and the Weill of the Maxwell Anderson musicals, the Whitman Songs, and the Jewish-Christian affiliations of his last months. It is in the major-mode episodes of the Ruth scene, and above all in the Ruth-Boaz duet, that Weill was most plainly preparing himself for communication with mass audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. As in the exuberant March to Zion, so in the tenderness and the growing passion of the Ruth-Boaz duet: the preferences, aesthetic principles, and value judgements of 'informed' elites have apparently been set aside in favour of the simplest and most direct emotional appeal.

Already, it would seem, the future composer

* Walter F. Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis*, Stanford, 1967, p.228.

of *Lost in the Stars* is meeting Werfel's insistent demand for 'Melody' in terms which define some of the objectives of *The Song of Bernadette*. In that respect the Ruth scene illustrates, more clearly than any other, the characteristic polyvalences of *Der Weg der Verheissung* and the risks entailed in over-emphasizing their obvious attractions in the current theoretical, critical, and cultural climates. As a means of approaching the Weill centenary in the year 2000, *Der Weg der Verheissung* has the undoubted advantage that it can be promoted and marketed to the open-minded and the intellectually curious on the grounds that 'All Weill', or most of him, 'is there'. For that purpose, its reticulated structure is ideal. But the true fascination of the piece derives not from the exemplary character of this or that passage according to this or that theory, but rather from the inter-dependence of the parts – the weakest as well as the strongest. Melody, melody, and more melody, regardless of formal, dramatic, and large-scale structural considerations, would never have been enough for Weill; and it was certainly not enough to save *The Eternal Road*.

'All Weill' is of course a counter-slogan to the discarded but not forgotten banners of the 'Two-Weill' movement. Although the movement itself has long since been disbanded and its leaders banished to the outer darkness, the musical person in the street, the professional or amateur musician in theatre, opera house, or concert venue, and the conscientious and honest-to-god listener, tends to remain unconvinced. With the best will in the world, the evidence of their ears still makes it as difficult for them to accept the notion of a unitary Weill as it is easy – now – to revere a unitary Stravinsky.

As the Weill centenary approaches, the debates about *Der Weg der Verheissung* might well begin with a frank admission on all sides that there were indeed two Weills – Weill and Lenya. By the same token there were two Werfels – Franz and Alma. This would seem to be an opportune moment for opening a new enquiry – and not only from the standpoint of gender studies – into the influences exerted by these two remarkable women on their respective husbands, and the rapport between them that developed over the 15 or so years after Weill's death.

Neither Weill nor Werfel were the weak men their detractors often claimed; but each was malleable up to a point. The fact that Alma Mahler possessed heavier hammers than Lenya, and rather more of them, is less important than the skills and intelligence with which they were wielded.*

Envoi

The story of Schoenberg's frustrated attempt to congratulate Britten after the performance of the *Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings* which Britten had conducted in Los Angeles soon after the end of World War II is well known: the message delivered to Britten in so garbled a form that he did not recognize the name of his prospective visitor, and the reply to the effect that Mr Britten was unable to receive any more uninvited guests that evening. Distressing as the story is from every angle, it is easier to imagine than the results of a hypothetical encounter in postwar Hollywood between the composer of *Moses und Aron*, the *Kol Nidre*, and *A Survivor from Warsaw*, and his erstwhile admirer, the composer of *Der Weg der Verheissung* and its immediate begetter, *Die sieben Todsünden*. The sense in which Schoenberg might wish to congratulate Britten on his *Serenade* is as clear as the fact that there was no conceivable sense in which Schoenberg might have found it possible to pay a similar compliment to Weill.

And Weill? If Adorno's account is to be trusted, Weill saw Schoenberg's 'Way' as the only valid alternative to his own (which left no room for Britten, of course: but neither did Adorno). Before the judgement-seat of Schoenberg himself, Weill would surely have suppressed any thought of such a polarity. But at least with respect to *Die sieben Todsünden* and the key moments in *Der Weg* he could well have summoned in his defence the unquiet spirit of another of his natural enemies, and turned to his own account the short poem entitled 'Coda'. Its author is Ezra Pound:

O my songs,
Why do you look so eagerly and so curiously
into people's faces,
Will you find your lost dead among them?

Thanks are due to Dr. Sidney Fixman, Dr. Edward Harsh, and the staff of the Weill-Lenya Research Centre for much help with research and documentation.

* As far as the evidence of Lenya's true stature and natural gifts are concerned, two remarkable publications coinciding with her own centenary last October will be found invaluable: *LENYA The Legend: A Pictorial Autobiography*, edited and introduced by David Farneth (Thames & Hudson, London 1998); and *LENYA*, a magnificent production published by Bear Family Records (Germany) and containing in addition to Lenya's complete recordings on 13 CDs a very substantial hard-cover volume of documentation and pictures. Thanks to Farneth's meticulous editing of the 'Pictorial Autobiography' and the combined efforts of the many contributors to the Bear Family album, our present knowledge and understanding of Weill's lifelong if sometimes intermittent and wayward partner is much enhanced.