

# “Sundays at Salka’s”—Salka Viertel’s Los Angeles Salon as a Space of (Music-)Cultural Translation

Carola Bebermeier



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ORCID iD Carola Bebermeier:  [0000-0002-3940-7823](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3940-7823)

Institution (Carola Bebermeier): University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna; Department of Musicology and Performance Studies

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## Abstract

The salon of Austrian-Polish actress and screenwriter Salka Viertel (1889–1978) at 165 Mabery Road in Los Angeles was from the 1930s to the 1950s a central place for networking, an artistic experimental laboratory and catalyst for creative processes, a “haven for the homeless” (“Hafen der Heimatlosen,” according to Berthold Viertel), and a space for informal conviviality for both artists and intellectuals who had fled Europe during the 1930s/40s and leading figures in the Hollywood film industry. It was a place where Max Reinhardt and Else Heim, Charlie and Oona Chaplin, Arnold and Gertrud Schoenberg, Maria and Aldous Huxley, Louise and Hanns Eisler, Helene Weigel, Ruth Berlau and Bertolt Brecht, Thomas and Katia Mann, Heinrich and Nelly Mann, and Gretel and Theodor W. Adorno met with actors and directors like Johnny Weissmüller, Greta Garbo, Irving Thalberg, George Cukor, Tallulah Bankhead, and Ernst Lubitsch.

This article will analyze Salka Viertel’s salon as a space of (music-)cultural translation. The analysis will present her role as a cultural broker between two supposedly foreign cultural circles—the film world of Hollywood and the artists and intellectuals who fled Europe—and give examples of successful cultural translation as well as examples which point to “the fragilities and differences in translational dynamics” (Doris Bachmann-Medick).

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# Prologue

Salka Viertel is, as you know, the sister of Eduard Steuermann and in a very big position here in the film industry, script writer for Garbo at MGM, very famous and influential and something of a social focal point for Hollywood intellectuals.<sup>[1]</sup>

[1] This quote is from a letter by Theodor W. Adorno to his parents living in New York in 1942. He and his wife Gretel had arrived in Los Angeles shortly before, where they met numerous old acquaintances and companions who, like them, had to flee their European homeland for political, ethnic, or religious reasons during the Nazi dictatorship and Second World War. Private correspondence from the so-called émigré community like this letter by Adorno,<sup>[2]</sup> semi-public archival sources, and secret intelligence files testify to the central position of Austrian-Polish actress and screenplay writer Salka Viertel (1889–1978) as well as the importance and prominence of her Sunday salon gatherings. Salon and salonnière acted as a kind of anchor as well as a connector within various networks, for example between the émigré community and the Hollywood film industry: “Every well known individual arriving in Hollywood eventually finds himself or herself in the living room of SALKA VIERTEL.”<sup>[3]</sup> All the same, Viertel’s position as well as her work is usually marginalized in the numerous popular exile publications or autobiographies (both accessible to the broader public) of her famous guests. For example, the close contact the Brecht and Viertel families maintained with each other, including almost daily visits, only becomes clear when one looks at FBI files.<sup>[4]</sup> Notably, in his *Arbeitsjournal* (work journal), which was seemingly kept like a diary and was later published, Bertolt Brecht never mentions his collaboration with Salka Viertel on the (unrealized) film script *Silent Witness*, which probably took place around 1944 to early 1945.<sup>[5]</sup> Since Brecht documented his collaboration with Salka Viertel’s son Hans as well as with her husband Berthold in his work journal, the marginalization of Salka is possibly gender-related. However, the omission of her salon in the (self-)historiographies of the émigré community seems to be related more to the non- or pre-institutional status of this creative laboratory. Salons were protected spaces where informal artistic as well as political and personal exchange could take place.<sup>[6]</sup> The lack of any mention of this space in popular publications hence does not diminish its actual importance but rather shows that these in-between spaces have long been marginalized in official historiography.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Methodological Approach and Source Material

Following a brief review on Salka Viertel’s European upbringing and socialization, I will analyze her salon at 165 Mabery Road in Los Angeles as a space of (music-)cultural translation that, according to Indian-American critical theorist Homi K. Bhabha, invited its participants to enter into “Third Spaces” of cultural communication.<sup>[8]</sup> Cultural practices, institutions, and actors move to new places through migration, causing them to undergo processes of transformation as well as intermingling. As a result of these movements, culture is constantly being renegotiated, and that is precisely why translation is necessary, as are places in which this translation can occur. The analysis of translational processes calls attention to negotiations between cultures, and thereby questions of essentialist and separatist concepts of culture.<sup>[9]</sup> In this way, it makes tangible those cultural in-between spaces that dynamize identities and allow migration as well as exile to be grasped as processes. However, it is not only the migrants but also the persons in the area of

arrival who experience changes, leading to the emergence of a hybrid space of action in which mediation can take place. Ultimately, the practice of cultural translation enables people to balance their own multiple cultural affiliations and to make differences fruitful, not least at all artistically.<sup>[10]</sup>

In this context, I furthermore will discuss Salka Viertel's role as a "cultural broker"<sup>[11]</sup> between two supposedly foreign cultural circles—the film world of Hollywood and the artists and intellectuals who fled Europe—presenting examples of both successful and failed cultural translation, the latter pointing to "the fragilities and differences in translational dynamics."<sup>[12]</sup> The difficulties of adapting to a new cultural environment are also evident in a composition by Viertel's salon guest Hanns Eisler that was written in American exile: the *Hollywood Songbook*. It was created in collaboration with Bertolt Brecht and also contains a poem by Viertel's husband Berthold Viertel. Considered an artistic trace of the experience of alienation in relation to the living and working conditions in Californian exile, it may give additional insight into the evocation of the émigré conditions. Moreover, as will be further discussed in the relevant section, both practices—running or visiting a salon gathering and working on a song cycle—seem to have served similar functions, which connected the protagonists to their European cultural homeland and formed a sense of homely "havens" (Berthold Viertel)<sup>[13]</sup> in American exile.

As has already become evident from the brief introduction, the source material on Salka Viertel's salon consists to a large extent of both published and unpublished ego-documents—autobiographies, letters, diaries<sup>[14]</sup>—which, according to the historian Johann Gustav Droysen's typology, belong to the category of *Traditionsquellen* (traditional sources). In contrast to the so-called *Überrestquellen* (remnant sources), these sources are usually created with a specific intention and in awareness of their historicity.<sup>[15]</sup> Especially in the case of autobiographies, the information given must therefore be critically examined, because whereas letters and diaries often only recount isolated experiences or disjointed reflections on certain topics with selective references to the life of the author, an autobiography usually presents a coherent life narrative.<sup>[16]</sup> The author's own life is described in retrospect and from a certain state of consciousness and is placed in a structural context in which present and past experiences are perceived as part of a process and placed in an interrelation based on continuity. Moreover, autobiographies follow a narrative model and are thus narrative constructions, which leads to a selection, arrangement, and direction of what is presented. This is abundantly clear, for example, in Salka Viertel's autobiography *The Kindness of Strangers*, in which the author divides her life story into three periods (childhood, adulthood, old age) on the very first page and connects them to three places that, in retrospect, seem most significant to her life (Sambor, Santa Monica, Klosters). She finally proposes the special proximity to water (river, sea, stream) as a link between these places of life.<sup>[17]</sup> Memories, in written or oral form, are thus "not 'copies' of the events, but rather capture how an individual experienced a particular event."<sup>[18]</sup>

[2] Even if letters and diaries do not construct an encompassing narrative of a life story, the writers are aware of their concrete and potential addressees, especially in the case of letters, particularly if, as in the case of Salka Viertel and her salon guests, they have a certain degree of prominence and the publication of the material cannot be ruled out. While in the case of diaries, self-reflection is a central element, which may well contain potential stylizations, or, as in the case of Bertolt Brecht's *Arbeitsjournal*, omissions, it must be kept in mind when evaluating letters that, on the one hand, they have a communicative character and address a concrete person with often very mundane matters of life, but on the other hand, they contain conceptions of the self and of others which can well be "comparable to the invention of literary characters"

(“vergleichbar mit der Erfindung literarischer Figuren”).<sup>[19]</sup> For this reason, I will attempt to compare the statements of the various ego-documents with each other and thus to verify their historicity.

In addition to the aforementioned source material, most of which has been published, I made archival visits to the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach as well as the Akademie der Künste Berlin to evaluate collections of source material of both members of the Viertel family and various members of the émigré community.<sup>[20]</sup> The fact that these published and unpublished sources sometimes reveal different (and at times contradictory) information was already demonstrated by the above-mentioned example of the collaboration between Salka Viertel and Bertolt Brecht.

A third type of source material used in this study, which needs to be treated with special care as well as sensitivity, is secret intelligence files. Due to accusations of communist sentiment and activities, a large part of the émigré community was spied on by the FBI in the 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>[21]</sup> FBI files on most members, including Salka and Berthold Viertel, are available for examination on request. The fact that these accusations were rarely substantiated and, as is clearly evident in the case of the Viertels, that surveillance continued despite a lack of proof, makes this source a result of an unjust violation of privacy and thus a delicate document. Furthermore, the interest of the FBI is directed in such a way that the information contained in the material can only be valid on the basis of this knowledge interest. For this reason, I have decided not to ignore the content of the files, as it does reveal information relevant to some topics that cannot be found in other types of sources, for example the close connection between the Viertel and Brecht families, as mentioned above. Nevertheless, besides information on the visitors of the house and contact persons of the family, this source material is in large parts rather suspect and problematic for ethical reasons as well as in regard to its trustworthiness. For instance, in March 1942 a confidential informant claims in a file that Viertel could be the wife of the late illegitimate son of the last German Emperor and a friend of the Jewish gangster and mafioso Willie Bioff.<sup>[22]</sup>

## Salka Viertel—Biographical Sketches

Before presenting her salon, I will now give a brief overview of Salka Viertel's life up to her migration to the United States. The focus will be primarily on the biographical fragments that shed light on Viertel's acquired salon practices and skills, but also on her social background, and thus indirectly on her sociocultural values and beliefs.<sup>[23]</sup>

Salka Viertel was born as Salomea Sara Steuermann in 1889 in the small town of Sambor in Galicia, which at that time still belonged to the Habsburg Monarchy. She was born into an educated upper-middle-class Jewish family, whose family estate “Wychylowka” has a strong presence in Viertel's memoirs as well as in her letters. She later tried to re-establish the comfort and, apparently despite the Galician province, cosmopolitan openness of her family in her own homes. Her father Joseph Steuermann was a lawyer and mayor of the city, and her mother Auguste had studied singing in Vienna before her marriage, making the children's pronounced artistic-musical interests and ambitions understandable. As the wife of the mayor, Auguste Steuermann took on various social responsibilities in Sambor, such as organizing charity events or running regular Sunday salons, the latter probably being the decisive model for Salka Viertel's

own social gatherings in Los Angeles. In her unpublished memoirs, Auguste Steuermann describes the social gatherings in her house in the following way:

As my husband played an important role in the political life of the city, the most respected people of the city and the nobility of the surrounding districts, as well as many eminent personalities, university professors, etc., from the neighboring capital Lemberg often and gladly came to our house, and as immodest as it sounds, the social life of the city was centered in our house.<sup>[24]</sup>

In his foreword to Salka Viertel's autobiography, the writer Carl Zuckmayer (a friend of the Viertel couple) emphasizes precisely these cultural practices of the educated upper middle classes that were cultivated in the Steuermann house:

Wychylowka was the center of the world. ... Her [Salka Viertel's] father was a great lord in the country and was also recognized as such by the non-Jews; this was due less to his wealth than to the culture that had been established and cultivated in the Wychylowka house. It was not the hybrid culture of the upstarts or the "upper class," but that of inspired life, genuine education, which is always musically inclined, liberal and open to the world.<sup>[25]</sup>

In particular the family's eldest son, Eduard Steuermann, fulfilled all his parents' expectations with his piano and composition studies, including lessons with Arnold Schoenberg. The fact that Salka and her sister Ruzia were striving for an acting career, however, was only accepted after intensive family conflicts and twists of fate, such as the death of Salka Viertel's first fiancé.<sup>[26]</sup>

Accordingly, growing up in an open, upper-middle-class, artistic, and intellectual household presumably laid the foundation for Viertel's social activities in Los Angeles. However, the impressions she gathered during her time as an actress in various European cities, such as Vienna, Dresden, Düsseldorf, and Berlin, should not be underestimated either. In all these cities, a vivid salon culture still existed in the 1910s and 1920s, which was also experienced and/or shaped by Viertel's later salon guests. In the 1910s, for example, she lived with her brother Eduard in Berlin, where both were regularly invited to the Sunday gatherings of the composer Ferruccio Busoni and his wife Gerda. Relating to this, Viertel notes in her autobiography:

In their large salon international celebrities, members of high finance and young musicians gathered. Busoni went from group to group, followed by three small, hunchbacked ladies who were hopelessly in love with him and incessantly jealous of one another.<sup>[27]</sup>

It was through Busoni's network that the Steuermann siblings also got to know Eduard's later teacher and Salka's later salon guest Arnold Schoenberg in Berlin.

## Viertel's Migration to the United States

[3] Migrating to the US in 1928 was at various levels a far-reaching change in the lives of Salka Viertel, her husband, the Viennese writer and director Berthold, and their three sons Hans, Peter, and Thomas. Originally mainly due to financial difficulties, Berthold Viertel accepted the invitation of the Fox Film Corporation to work for the company as a screenwriter and film director. Europeans were in demand in the Hollywood of the silent film era, and there was the opportunity



to earn a lot of money in a short time. Therefore, emigration to America was initially planned as a stay of at most three years in order to improve their economic situation.<sup>[28]</sup> In contrast to her husband, however, Salka Viertel lacked career opportunities for the first time. Her attempts to work as a film actress failed because of both the advent of the sound film and the accompanying language barriers, as well as because of her age (she was in her early forties) and her appearance, which did not match the classic Hollywood screen standards of the time. She felt degraded to being merely a “film-wife.”<sup>[29]</sup> After it became clear at the beginning of the 1930s that the Viertels’ stay in the US would turn out to be a more lasting episode, Salka Viertel developed various, and, as time went by, highly successful strategies to cope with her lack of professional prospects as an actress, but also with the social life of a Hollywood “film-wife”: she became a screenplay-writer and salonnière and thus a networker and cultural broker par excellence.

She had been able to use her personal friendship with Metro Goldwyn Mayer’s (MGM) best-paid star Greta Garbo to get involved in the film business, and after a short time she proved that she was not only up to the challenges of screenplay-writing but also knew how to secure an influential position as a representative of Garbo’s interests. The first film collaboration between the two in 1933, *Queen Christina*, became a commercial as well as a critical success in the US and worldwide. It belongs to the so-called pre-Code Hollywood movies which were not yet subject to the increased censorship of the film industry after 1934. The well-known scene, for example, in which Queen Christina, played by Garbo, gives her lady-in-waiting Ebba, played by Elizabeth Young, a kiss on the mouth, would not have been allowed under the restrictions of the Motion Picture Production Code.<sup>[30]</sup>

## “Sundays at Salka’s”: Characteristics of the Salon at 165 Mabery Road

With her then considerable salary, Salka Viertel supported the entire family, including her husband, who from 1936 on was unemployed most of the time, as well as her relatives still living in Europe. In the year of the release of *Queen Christina* (1933), she also bought the house at 165 Mabery Road in which the family had already lived on rent since 1929 in order “to have a corner ... where you can swallow your own spinach” when the world took a turn for the worse (“wenn alles schief geht eine Ecke zu haben wo man seinen eigenen Spinat fressen kann”).<sup>[31]</sup> Similar to Viertel’s parental home, the “Wychyłowka,” this house in the following two decades became the center of the family and at the same time a social hub and meeting place for Hollywood artists and German-speaking exiles.

In contemporary sources as well as in later memoirs, this meeting place has often been perceived and described as a salon. The designations range from the concrete term “salon,” as used for example by Marta Feuchtwanger or Christopher Isherwood, to the hybrid descriptions typical of salon culture, as used by Viertel’s son Peter, such as “my mother’s Sunday tea parties at Mabery Road,”<sup>[32]</sup> but also “Sunday afternoons” or “Sundays at Salka’s.”<sup>[33]</sup>



**Figure 1: 165 Mabery Road (1930s); by courtesy of Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, Sammlung Franz Glück, ZPH 1443**

What kind of place was 165 Mabery Road, which over time became a synonym for European hospitality, even for people who never visited it? In her autobiography Salka Viertel describes her first impression of the house with strong naturalistic, almost paradisiacal references and draws parallels to the omnipresent “Wychylowka”:

We drove down a short, winding road overlooking the ocean, and stopped in front of a large, fenced-in house in the so-called English style. Two pine trees grew on each side of the entrance; next to them a magnolia spread its glossy leaves and enormous white blossoms. The fence was overgrown with honeysuckle, entangled with pink Portugal roses. The air was suffused with fragrances. ... Mr. Guericio [the real estate agent] opened the front door and we went in. The first floor consisted of a very vast living room with a fireplace and a dining area. It had eight windows and a glass door which opened into the garden. A staircase between the dining area and living room led to the bedrooms; they also were spacious and had a view of the ocean. ... In the garden grew a pittosporum tree and the inevitable hibiscus bushes, also an apricot and fig tree. At the far end an old incinerator tried to hide behind a lonely, bedraggled lilac bush. ... From the windows one could see the ocean and the sharp profile of the hills on the other side of the canyon, and I could hear the waves pounding the shore.<sup>[34]</sup>





**Figure 2: The garden of 165 Mabery Road (1930/40s); by courtesy of Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, Sammlung Franz Glück, ZPH 1443**

The spatial foundation for Salka Viertel's Sunday salon was on the one hand the spacious living room, for which she bought a piano after her brother Eduard Steuermann emigrated to the US in 1938, and on the other hand the garden, in which the guests also engaged in sports and played ping pong or, like Peter Viertel and John Huston, met to box.<sup>[35]</sup> Although a certain playful aspect, for example in the form of conversation games or theatrical performances, was generally a common constitutive element in salon gatherings, this sportive element seems rather unusual and is possibly one reason why Viertel's gathering was described as unconventional in contemporary testimonies, as Marta Feuchtwanger's remark shows:

She had something which you would call a salon, only it was without any pretension. Everybody liked to be there; everybody felt immediately at home. It was not very elegant, but very well—the house was with much taste.<sup>[36]</sup>

In Peter Viertel's autobiography, it even becomes evident that his concept of a salon does not match the experiences he gathered at his mother's "tea parties" at all. For, although he discusses the Sunday gatherings at various points, he refuses to call them salons: "It wasn't really a 'salon' ... . She liked to cook for the people she admired and gave tea parties on Sundays, and that was about all there was to it."<sup>[37]</sup>

[4] Another characteristic feature of Viertel's social gatherings was the encounter between two sociocultural circles that were considered to be divergent, although in fact there was a great deal of overlap between these two groups. Initially, the guests, such as Johnny Weissmüller, Ben and Ad Schulberg, Ernst Lubitsch, Tallulah Bankhead, Wilhelm Dieterle, and Greta Garbo, came predominantly from Hollywood's film industry, where the Viertel couple—at first mainly Berthold Viertel—began to establish themselves professionally. From the mid-1930s onwards, European

émigrés followed, most of them intellectuals and artists who were looking for political safety as well as financial security in the film industry. These émigrés came mainly from (Central) European cities such as Vienna, Berlin, Munich, London, and Paris. They had been born in the nineteenth century, had lived in various forms of government, both monarchies and democracies, and had personally experienced and shaped European salon culture; among them were Maria and Aldous Huxley, Hanns and Louise Eisler, Helene Weigel, Ruth Berlau and Bertolt Brecht, Charlie Chaplin, Katja and Thomas Mann, Billy Wilder, Nelly and Heinrich Mann, Lion and Marta Feuchtwanger, Christopher Isherwood, Arnold and Gertrud Schoenberg, Liesl and Bruno Frank, Theodor W. and Gretel Adorno, and Helene Thimig and Max Reinhardt.

For the European emigrants, the special kind of sociability generated in Salka Viertel's salon was not least a reminiscence of their geographical and sociocultural home. For example, in a letter Berthold Viertel called his wife's salon "a haven for the homeless" ("ein Hafen für die Heimatlosen").<sup>[38]</sup> The émigré community experienced a familiar cultural practice and the values associated with it in the new and unfamiliar environment of California, where values and practices were a challenge for many. Isherwood summarizes the atmosphere of the gatherings as well as his impression of the hostess from a European perspective:

All sorts of celebrities came to the house, not because Salka made the least effort to catch them but because they wanted to see her and to be with their own friends, who were also her guests. Actually, Salka was a somewhat self-effacing hostess. She greeted newcomers warmly and got them involved in conversation with earlier arrivals, then she disappeared into the kitchen to see how things were going. I remember her most vividly at this moment of greeting; she was strikingly aristocratic and unaffected. Her posture, the line of her spine and neck, was still beautiful; you could believe that she had been a great actress. I think most of her [Salka Viertel's] visitors were sincerely fond of her but perhaps they tended to take her for granted.<sup>[39]</sup>



**Figure 3: From left to right: Dita Parlo, Berthold Viertel, Arnold Schönberg, Thomas**

**Viertel, Heinrich George, and Salka Viertel in the garden of 165 Mabery Road (early 1930s); by courtesy of Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, Sammlung Franz Glück, ZPH 1443**

For the American guests, on the other hand, the concept of salon gatherings as well as Viertel herself had something exotic and special about them that caught attention. Even though there is evidence of salon gatherings as a cultural practice of the upper middle classes in the US since the mid-nineteenth century, they were limited, as in Europe, predominantly to the metropolitan regions, especially the East Coast, but also the southern states.<sup>[40]</sup> Los Angeles and its environs, by contrast, was a largely rural region until the establishment of the film industry in the 1920s and 1930s. Bourgeois visiting and socializing practices were rarely established in this sociocultural milieu, which is why there seems to have been no genuine salon culture in Los Angeles that Salka Viertel could have connected to with her gatherings. Also, Viertel as a person, who cultivated to some extent a quite liberal and independent artistic lifestyle<sup>[41]</sup> and furthermore apparently embodied the European educated bourgeoisie,<sup>[42]</sup> seemed to have aroused an impression in Hollywood society, which was noticed by the Viertel couple and reflected in their letters. For example, during his more than four-year stay in London between 1934 and 1938, Berthold Viertel reported to his wife on several occasions that he was approached by Americans who had just visited London with remarks about her and her salon on Mabery Road:

They say you're big and strong, that you're beyond the scope, beyond the scope of Hollywood. They all say you're "fine" and "a peach"—and "grand." But with all of them, through this coarseness, which with Americans means or is supposed to mean shamefulness of heart, rings through a great warmth that they have for you, and respect, high respect, that's universal.<sup>[43]</sup>

Likewise, Salka Viertel herself noticed an interested reaction from the Americans towards her person; for example: "The impression I have on people here is really surprising."<sup>[44]</sup> Film scholar Gertraud Steiner summarizes these impressions and at the same time searches for their origin, when she writes: "Her 'old world' charm, which came from a sunken world, the bourgeoisie of Galicia, which at that time belonged to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, undoubtedly gave her a special flair, which could not be found elsewhere in Hollywood."<sup>[45]</sup> This "special flair" was certainly on the one hand the magnet that attracted guests of different cultural backgrounds to the Sunday gatherings. On the other hand, it marked the salon as an interstitial space of cultural translation,<sup>[46]</sup> which, in the case of the Viertels, brought with it a constant and apparently tedious self-explanation, as Salka Viertel reflected:

I became aware that we were constantly explaining ourselves to our American friends, trying to convey our identity and what really possessed us, who we were. Berthold's futile efforts to communicate made me unhappy and I hated when he touched upon matters which I knew his new associates would not understand.<sup>[47]</sup>

Bachmann-Medick comments: "In these 'transit zones' of transformation, translation is a practice embedded in a critical engagement with the tug of war between antagonistic cultural affiliations, meanings and requirements. 'Translated men,' as [Salman] Rushdie calls them, are human beings translated from one culture to another; however, in the process they also develop forms of self-translation themselves."<sup>[48]</sup>



# Salka Viertel's Efforts as a Cultural Broker

[5] As Salka Viertel and her family had been living in Los Angeles since 1928 and had developed close professional as well as personal ties to key players in the Hollywood film industry during the 1930s, many artists and intellectuals who fled Europe during the Nazi dictatorship turned to Viertel for support on different concerns. Still in her papers at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach are, for example, plenty of letters of request in which mostly Jewish petitioners ask for help with the issue of an affidavit so their relatives or friends would be able to emigrate from Europe to the US.<sup>[49]</sup> Also because of Viertel's professional success, many sought connections and contacts to the film industry. Furthermore, her inside knowledge enabled her to mediate cultural practices and strategies—such as negotiation tactics, but also the development of artistic subjects and projects that potentially could be of interest for the film industry—for (successful) work in Hollywood.<sup>[50]</sup> Indeed, there is evidence in Berthold Viertel's letters that European exiles who wanted to gain a professional foothold in Hollywood in the 1930–50s were intentionally sent to Salka Viertel and her social gatherings. During his time in London, but also in New York, he repeatedly announces to his wife new arrivals in Los Angeles, asking that she advise them and introduce them at her gatherings to the appropriate circles.<sup>[51]</sup> In this way, she became a “cultural broker”<sup>[52]</sup> who used her salon to build up networks.<sup>[53]</sup> For example, it was at one of her gatherings that Bertolt Brecht was introduced to Charles Laughton, which led to their collaboration on the English version of Brecht's play *Leben des Galilei* and finally to its performance at the Los Angeles *Coronet Theater* in 1947. Also, Billy Wilder's first Hollywood contacts were established at Viertel's salon, and for the young writer and family friend Christopher Isherwood she arranged a job at her own employer *MGM*.<sup>[54]</sup>

However, although it seems to be obvious that many of those who emigrated from Europe were potentially very useful for the young and still developing Hollywood film industry and vice versa, there were at times considerable communication problems, which were not only due to language difficulties but also concerned matters of culture. Viertel's salon was a place where these cultural differences might potentially be negotiated and translated. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that “translation is ... not a simple transfer process, but a negotiation of resistance and an ongoing transformation process that results from the superimpositions characteristic of migration.”<sup>[55]</sup> In fact, various comments by contemporary witnesses confirm that these encounters did not always proceed without conflict and that resistance actually did have to be negotiated. Therefore, the gatherings were without doubt in some ways perceived as challenging. Christopher Isherwood, who lived as a subtenant on Mabery Road for a time, wrote in a diary entry from December 1939 that he wished Salka Viertel would invite fewer people and select them in a “less ill-assorted” manner.<sup>[56]</sup> What exactly Isherwood wanted to express with this formulation and what specifically bothered him about the composition of the guests cannot be definitively retraced anymore. In any case, for the social conditions of Hollywood, it was not only the refuge-related internationality that was unusual but also the mingling of the various degrees of leverage and celebrity. Literary scholar Helga Schreckenberger remarks on this: “With this practice of mixing the powerful with the unknown, Viertel defied Hollywood's hierarchy, which was defined by income and influence.”<sup>[57]</sup>

Moreover, in his autobiography, Peter Viertel, who was born in Dresden but migrated to the US at the age of eight and whose cultural socialization can be considered strongly US-American to the discontent of his parents,<sup>[58]</sup> also gives a pointed anecdotal version of the cultural, and most likely also generational, challenges of understanding and translation.<sup>[59]</sup> He himself, his first wife

Virginia Schulberg, his friend the writer Irwin Shaw, and his wife Marian were among the regulars of the Sunday afternoons during the mid-1940s. He sketches the following scene as characteristic of the communication between the guests:

The four of us were united in a common front against the European regular guests, who, no matter what innovative American play, or even film, was mentioned, would dismiss it with the words “Oh, that was done in Berlin in the twenties” or “We’ve seen that done before.” Jigee [Virginia Schulberg] said: “I suppose if fascism ever comes to America, they’ll say, ‘oh, we had that in Germany long ago,’” a flippant remark that provoked only polite laughter at the tea table.<sup>[60]</sup>

It is evident at this point that there was a need for intermediation at different levels in any case. And even if Peter Viertel describes himself and his friends as a “common front,” thus emphasizing confrontation and the lack of understanding between two supposedly homogenous groups, the exchange in the protected space of the salon ensures that people have to face and deal with each other:

Cross-cultural translation is a continuous process, which serves as much as constitutes the cohabitation of people who can afford neither occupying the same space nor mapping that common space in their own, separate ways. No act of translation leaves either of the partners intact. Both emerge from their encounter changed, different at the end of the act from they were at its beginning.<sup>[61]</sup>

Nevertheless, it is important to state that these encounters at Viertel’s salon were by no means on common ground, as there was a considerable imbalance of power between the two parties. There was “the migrant culture of the ‘in-between,’ the minority position,”<sup>[62]</sup> which consisted of people who had been mostly successful in their European home countries before their migration, and the majority position, which consisted of people already working in or leading the film industry.

[6] One remarkable example that points to the fragilities of the translational processes as well as to the power gap within Salka Viertel’s networks is the canceled collaboration between the composer Arnold Schoenberg and the film producer Irving Thalberg. This episode is now considered to be paradigmatic of the difficult relationship between Schoenberg and the Hollywood film industry.<sup>[63]</sup> Nevertheless, author Donna Rifkind stresses in her recent Viertel biography *The Sun and Her Stars: Salka Viertel and Hitler’s Exiles in the Golden Age of Hollywood* that the prominent Thalberg-Schoenberg chapter was a story not just of two creative persons but actually of a cultural network and its agents, in which Salka Viertel played a central role:

Salka’s position as a cultural broker between the two men shows that Thalberg and Schoenberg, each often portrayed as a stubbornly independent genius, operated as everyone does within a network of connections, without which they could not function. No one understood this network better, or maneuvered through it more effectively, than Salka.<sup>[64]</sup>

For this incident we have to rely mainly on Viertel’s report in her autobiography. The challenges of this type of source material, especially with regard to the aspect of “self-fashioning,” have already been discussed at the beginning of this article.<sup>[65]</sup> And even if the inner details of the meeting cannot be verified, it can be reasonably assumed *that* the meeting took place, since contemporary witnesses, who could have contradicted this account, were still alive at the time of the publication. On the contrary, Marta Feuchtwanger, for instance, emphasized in her memoirs

that Viertel would have generally reported very cautiously: “Because her discreetness was so great; the most interesting things she didn’t write, although it would have been a great sensation here.”<sup>[66]</sup>

In the previously mentioned passage of her autobiography, Viertel reports that she was commissioned by her supervisor at *MGM*, Irving Thalberg, to arrange a meeting with Arnold Schoenberg in order to persuade him to write the music for the film *The Good Earth*. Thalberg, who had heard a New York Philharmonic radio concert featuring Schoenberg’s early string sextet *Verklärte Nacht*, op. 4, and considered the style to fit the film perfectly, also requested her to participate in the meeting as a translator. Viertel agreed and instructed both parties diplomatically in advance. She explained to Thalberg that meanwhile Schoenberg had given up the late romantic style of *Verklärte Nacht* and had started to compose in the twelve-tone technique, which might be challenging for some people. Also, she warned Schoenberg that although Thalberg was eager to engage an established composer for the film, he most likely would interfere with different aspects of the composition.<sup>[67]</sup> During the meeting, she not only assisted with language problems but actually also supported cultural understanding, for example by reciting at Schoenberg’s request parts of his *Pierrot Lunaire* in order to give Thalberg an idea of how the sound of the *The Good Earth*’s film music might turn out and how Schoenberg was planning to work with the actors. Schoenberg also conveyed to Thalberg that in his opinion all music in films is terrible, so he would not agree to the collaboration unless he was given complete control over the sound, including the spoken words of the actors. Viertel reports that after the conference Thalberg confessed to her his fascination with Schoenberg: “This is a remarkable man.”<sup>[68]</sup> Still he was convinced that the composer would write the music on the studio’s terms. The next morning Viertel got a phone call from Gertrud Schoenberg, who declared that her husband would only participate in the project if he had complete control over the sound of the film, including the dialogue, and that he would charge twice the salary. Although Thalberg seems to have been impressed by Schoenberg as a person and an artist, he could not agree to the composer’s demands and commissioned Herbert Strohart, the composer of, among other things, *Queen Christina*, with the composition of the film score.<sup>[69]</sup> What becomes evident in this example is the already mentioned imbalance of power within Salka Viertel’s networks. Despite her efforts as a cultural broker in creating Third Spaces of cultural translation where cultural differences could be negotiated, the culture of the US-American majority clearly dominated. The better the European immigrants adapted to that system, the better they succeeded, as shown by the careers of Salka Viertel, Billy Wilder, or Hanns Eisler (before his accusations of communistic engagements).

Berthold Viertel’s transition to life within US culture was apparently much harder than his wife’s, for after only a few years he left California. In order to find a professional livelihood as a director and writer, and certainly also to escape Hollywood society, he lived between 1930 and 1950 mainly in New York or London. Only occasionally, mostly during summer, was he present in Los Angeles. Retrospective accounts reveal that, like many European emigrants in California, he had difficulties settling in and rejected the capitalist orientation of Hollywood’s film industry. About him, composer Hanns Eisler told musicologist Hans Bunge: “Berthold Viertel, the extraordinary director and poet of distinction, was in a very miserable situation in Hollywood. It was terrible!”<sup>[70]</sup> In a letter to his wife, Viertel reflects quite objectively on his incompatibility with the Hollywood system: “Obviously I’m not up to the brutality of this machine, the mentality of these machine people. I’m not able to assert myself.”<sup>[71]</sup>

With this kind of cultural alienation regarding the market structures of the film industry, Berthold



Viertel was by no means an exceptional case within the émigré community, as shown, for example, by the anecdote of the failure of the collaboration between Arnold Schoenberg and Irving Thalberg.

## Music Cultural Translation Processes in Salka Viertel's Salon and Networks

[7] Within Salka Viertel's salon network, practices of successful as well as failed (music-)cultural translation can be traced not only in the form of composition commissions but also in forms of performing and listening to music from different cultures, in music-theoretical writings, such as the book *Composing for the Films* by Hanns Eisler and Theodor W. Adorno,<sup>[72]</sup> or in the compositions themselves. After all, when music and musicians migrate from one "language and sound context" ("Sprach- und Klangkontext")<sup>[73]</sup> to another, they inevitably enter into translation processes. Music is presented differently depending on the interpreter and the place, and in different places there are different instruments, so instrumentations have to be adapted or special sound preferences incorporated into the compositions.<sup>[74]</sup> As the Schoenberg-Thalberg example shows, these translation processes do not always have to lead to common understanding or even appreciation, but in any case, the mere process of coming to terms with one another leads, as the sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman puts it, to both emerging "from their encounter changed, different at the end of the act from they were at its beginning,"<sup>[75]</sup> even if this change might just be being freed from illusions.

Listening to music, be it Sunday radio concerts, Beethoven recordings from the long player,<sup>[76]</sup> or live performances, as well as making music were regular practices during the Viertel gatherings. The styles and genres could be quite diverse and were not limited to the European-US exchange. Once more, Christopher Isherwood's diaries provide an idea of the activities that took place during the salon gatherings. For example, in April 1950 he reports about a performance of a Latin American music ensemble consisting of a Peruvian guitarist and two dancers: "As a group they were incredibly beautiful. ... The dances had an airy uncanny birdlike authority."<sup>[77]</sup> Furthermore, he mentions that guests also sang songs, for instance German Christmas carols in December 1939.<sup>[78]</sup>

In addition to traditional classical radio symphony concerts or records, song-singing, and Latin American music, there were also American premieres of contemporary European composers, who usually belonged to the salon network themselves. Salka Viertel reports, for instance, on the first performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in Los Angeles at one of her Sunday gatherings in 1940:

Edward [Steuermann] used his summer vacations in Santa Monica to rehearse and prepare performances of Schoenberg's compositions, one of which, the *Pierrot Lunaire*, took place in our living room, with Schoenberg conducting and the lovely Erika Wagner ... speaking the text. All the literary and musical elite was present, among others three famous conductors: Bruno Walter, Otto Klemperer and Fritz Striedy. The applause was not unanimous, but it was led by Thomas Mann, clapping his hands heartily while Bruno Walter whispered into his ear, obviously disapproving.<sup>[79]</sup>

Although the composition had been performed in New York three times before (1923, 1925, and 1933), in November 1940 Schoenberg presented the piece for the first time in the city by

himself.<sup>[80]</sup> In this way, the private performance in Viertel's salon in September that same year served as a final rehearsal. It would be interesting to find a report of this performance by an American guest, for whom the music, unless he or she had attended one of the New York performances, was probably new and unknown. So far, however, I have only found a diary entry by Thomas Mann, who actually praised the performance but called the composition "outdatedly modern" ("veraltet modern").<sup>[81]</sup>

In any case, both examples of musical performances during a salon gathering provide indications of the function and significance that Viertel's salon, or salons in general, may have had for musicians and composers: in the protected space of the salon, performances could be rehearsed before they were presented in public in front of a larger audience. In this way, the response to new compositions could be tested and an exchange between listeners and performers or composers could take place prior to a piece or performance having to face public criticism. Furthermore, newly arrived musicians and ensembles were able to promote themselves in a smaller circle and hope to make use of the networks surrounding the salon circle. Since there was a lot of overlap between audience and performers in salon gatherings, a central point was certainly also the simple pleasure of making or listening to music. For the émigré community of Salka Viertel's salon, this was presumably accompanied by the memory of music they had heard or performed in Europe. In the case of *Pierrot Lunaire*, at least three persons can be identified who were present both at the Berlin premiere in 1912 and at the Los Angeles premiere in Viertel's living room in 1940: the salonnière herself, her brother Eduard Steuermann, and Arnold Schoenberg.

A composition that again focuses more on the failed cultural translation and mediation is the already mentioned song cycle *Hollywood Songbook* by Viertel's salon guest Hanns Eisler. It is considered an artistic trace of the experience of alienation in relation to the living and working conditions in Californian exile and can be regarded as part of both European and US domestic music practice.<sup>[82]</sup> Songs were composed, marketed, interpreted, and received by both men and women in large quantities on both sides of the Atlantic, especially during the long nineteenth century. For some composers, songs were even the genre with which they were able to secure most of their income.<sup>[83]</sup> Hanns Eisler, on the contrary, seems to have approached the composition of his Hollywood songs with contrary motivations. Financially secure, he had no need and obviously no ambition to compose the pieces for a market. They rather seem to have emerged from a kind of daily compositional exercise, as he and Bertolt Brecht emphasize in their statements:

That was in that gloomy, eternal spring of Hollywood, when I told Brecht after we met again in America: "That's the classic place to write elegies!" There are the Roman Elegies by Goethe, which are one of my favorite works, which Brecht also admired very much, and we have to create something there now; one is not unpunished in Hollywood, one simply has to describe it. And Brecht promised to do that and then he brought me, I think, 8 Hollywood elegies ... . Well, there's not much to say about it, I composed them and then often performed them at home to the delight of Brecht and my friends. ... I wrote almost every day at least one song, sometimes more, after a text by Brecht or someone else, e.g. Hölderlin or Pascal. And on a big folder I wrote "Hollywood Songbook" or "Hollywood Journal," I don't remember it anymore, and said: That's my pastime. That was what I did besides work. Because I wrote quite different things for work in Hollywood—orchestral works, mostly orchestral works.<sup>[84]</sup>

[8] In Eisler's work on the songbook, the daily compositional practice and the collaboration with Brecht seem to have had greater significance than the resulting product in the form of a consistent song cycle. This is further supported by the fact that the cycle is indeed unfinished and

it is not entirely certain which songs the composer ultimately had intended for it.<sup>[85]</sup> Thus the work on the songs for Brecht and Eisler could have fulfilled a function very similar to that of Salka Viertel's Sunday salon for the émigré community in general: both were learned and familiar cultural practices that corresponded to personal values and identities. They could be practiced together with familiar people and in a known and fluent (sound) language; or, in reference to Berthold Viertel's quotation about his wife's salon: both practices functioned as havens. In his *Arbeitsjournal*, especially in the years 1942/43, Brecht, too, repeatedly describes joint work on or private performances of parts of the song cycle,<sup>[86]</sup> emphasizing the mutual benefits:

For me his musical setting is what a performance is for dramatic plays: the test. He [Hanns Eisler] reads with enormous precision. In the latter poem he polemicizes against the word "work" and is only satisfied when I replace it with "poem" or "verse." In the poem "In den Weiden am Sund" he cuts "over the rulers" because this way the poem seems purer to him.<sup>[87]</sup>

Written evidence of a performance of excerpts from the *Hollywood Songbook* on one of Viertel's Sunday afternoons is still missing. However, since musical performances including song-singing and listening to music during the gatherings were common, since both Brecht and Eisler were regular salon guests, and since a poem by Berthold Viertel is part of the song cycle, it is likely that some of the songs were also performed on Mabery Road.

Even though most of the poems of the *Hollywood Songbook* are by Bertolt Brecht and the genesis can be understood as a joint exile work by the two artists, the collection also contains texts by other (German) poets from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, for example by Friedrich Hölderlin, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Joseph von Eichendorff. In addition to the Brecht poems, however, Eisler included only two texts by contemporary poets: one by himself and, as just mentioned, one by Berthold Viertel. The latter, in his poem "Kalifornischer Herbst" (1943), sets a further memorial to the fig tree, which already appeared in Salka Viertel's description of the house on Mabery Road:

### *Kalifornischer Herbst*

Die Leiter blieb noch unterm Feigenbaume stehen,  
Doch er ist gelb und längst schon leer gegessen  
Von Schnäbeln und von Mündern, wem's zuerst geglückt.

Wird ihn der nächste Sommer grün und reich beladen sehen,  
Und kam der Friede unterdessen,  
Mag es ein anderer sein, der hier die Feigen pflückt.

Wir wären dann in kältere Breiten heimgegangen:  
Dort wächst kein Feigenbaum, und höchstens noch der Wein,  
Ja, Äpfel, Birnen, Kirschen, wenn auch nicht Zitronen.

Trotzdem gedeihn die Kinder dort mit roten Wangen,  
Und fällt der Schnee, wir werden um so frischer sein  
Und gern im wieder frei gewordenen Winter wohnen.<sup>[88]</sup>

Similar to the example of Berthold Viertel, the topics of the poems of the *Hollywood Songbook* revolve primarily around the living situation in exile, the unreachable European homeland and identity, and concerns about the war, as well as alienation from and a lack of understanding of the American cultural environment, especially the capitalist culture industry. However, Brecht's poems are generally much more critical than the rather melancholically wistful lyrics of Berthold Viertel. Especially in the so-called five Hollywood Elegies ("Unter den grünen Pfefferbäumen,"

“Die Stadt ist nach den Engeln genannt,” “Jeden Morgen, mein Brot zu verdienen,” “Diese Stadt hat mich belehrt,” and “In den Hügeln wird Gold gefunden”), Brecht critically examines the creation of art under capitalist conditions and the experiences of the artists associated with it, for example:

Jeden Morgen mein Brot zu verdienen  
Gehe ich zum Markt, wo Lügen verkauft werden.  
Hoffnungsvoll  
Reihe ich mich ein zwischen die Verkäufer.<sup>[89]</sup>

The concise language of this poem can also be found in the other elegies. According to Eisler it had a therapeutic function for Brecht:

It's amazing how a whole thing gets torn up in four lines. The scarcity then took over Brecht in other things as well. ... The horrible idyll of this landscape, which in and of itself is the brainchild of land speculation, because the landscape itself gives away nothing at all. ... In this strange, whitewashed idyll, one must express oneself concisely. One suffers from a lack of concentration in this monstrous oceanic climate. Brecht also complained about his health, that everything was too lukewarm and too mild for him, that there were no differences between the seasons, and that this eternal flower blossoming already made him vomit. He was very bitter about it. That led him to this very concise style as an antidote. “You can't let yourself go when the air is so mild,” he said.<sup>[90]</sup>

Parts of Brecht's poetic work in exile, but also the self-expressions of both artists, led to Los Angeles gaining a complex and critical reputation as place of exile during World War II. The US-American literary scholar Ehrhard Bahr, for example, is quite explicit with the statement: “It was Bertolt Brecht who gave Los Angeles a bad name in German literature.”<sup>[91]</sup> According to him, however, this bad reputation is based on a one-sided interpretation of Brecht's exile poetry as purely mimetic, which it is not. The poems rather pointed to his need to transfer the utopian images of Los Angeles and Hollywood into an allegory of a prototype of a modernist capitalistic metropolis. This prototype fulfilled the function of a heterotopia within his exile work.<sup>[92]</sup> The interpretation becomes more complex through Brecht's concept of poetic realism, although this is again less mimetic than critically oriented: “For Brecht, realism was obviously not a photographic reflection of reality, but instead a creative projection that demonstrated a critical attitude.”<sup>[93]</sup> Consequently, the songs do not so much offer insight into a concrete place of exile as show traces of life in exile itself.

[9] The fact that the alienation from the US-American culture (industry) in Brecht's poetry and Eisler's setting may have been interpreted a little too much on the side of mimesis seems to be an important objection. But nevertheless, it is equally undisputed that there actually was alienation and non-understanding felt within the émigré community and that precisely for this reason interstitial spaces of translation such as Salka Viertel's salon and her role as a cultural broker and mediator were of central importance. Characteristically, and in some respects also tragically, Viertel herself benefited little from her diverse social activities, networking, and cultural translation work in the very end, after her initial professional success as a Hollywood screenplay writer. Furthermore, it was particularly because of her social activities within the émigré community and her friendship with and support of Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler, who were both accused of communism and finally interrogated by the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1948, that Salka Viertel and her house on Mabery Road were recognized as a center of the émigré community and put under surveillance by the FBI, who called her a “Salon Communist” from 1942 on.<sup>[94]</sup> This reveals the downside of her exotic nimbus and the “special flair”<sup>[95]</sup> of her salon: the alienation of US-American social circles that were not connected to the

Hollywood art and film scene with regard to the lifestyles of some members of the émigré community. These reservations are made explicit in the Viertels' FBI files. Here, the immediate neighbors in Santa Monica claim to have little contact with the family and describe the living situation in the house as "a 'mess.'"<sup>[96]</sup> This can be read as a reference both to the extramarital partnerships of Salka and Berthold Viertel<sup>[97]</sup> and to their connections to Hollywood's gay community.<sup>[98]</sup> These alienations concerning the leftist and liberal political attitudes and life concepts dominating the Viertel's house led to accusations of communist sentiment and thus to spying by the FBI. After the interrogations of Brecht and Eisler, Salka Viertel suspected that she was on the Hollywood gray or even black list, because she was no longer able to get work as a screenplay writer in Hollywood.<sup>[99]</sup> In the mid-1950s, her financial difficulties were so severe that she had to sell the house on Mabery Road to the director and producer John Housman. He comments on this:

By the mid-fifties the great era of Salka's "salon" was over. So was her privileged position at MGM. ... Most of her celebrated émigrés who had used her house as their meeting place during and after the war had returned to Europe. Many of her friends and neighbors ... had been driven to Europe by the witch hunt.<sup>[100]</sup>

Viertel temporarily rented her former own house, then lived in smaller apartments in Los Angeles or with friends. However, with the abandonment of the house, her salon lost its material foundation and the Sunday gatherings came to an end. In addition, the remigration of prominent members of the émigré community to Europe during the 1950s made the salon's function as a space of cultural translation obsolete. Yet, as the surveillance of the FBI shows, Salka Viertel created as a salonnière a space of intercultural communication and exchange, a homely haven for the émigré community as well as an artistic laboratory that mattered in Los Angeles during Hollywood's so-called Golden Age.<sup>[101]</sup>

## Afterthoughts

This article presented and discussed the potentials and limitations of both Salka Viertel's salon in Los Angeles as a space of cultural translation and Viertel herself as a cultural broker. It became evident that, on the one hand, encounters in the salon led to successful artistic cooperation (such as the collaboration between Charles Laughton and Bertolt Brecht or the career of Gottfried Reinhardt inside the Hollywood film industry) and the experience of new but also familiar music-cultural impressions (such as the performances of the Latin American Music ensemble and of *Pierrot Lunaire*, as well as the practice of listening to symphonic music on the radio or the long player). Furthermore, Viertel was able to act as a cultural broker due to her professional and personal connections as well as her inside knowledge of the film industry. Because of these capabilities, she was able to mediate cultural practices and strategies for (successful) work in Hollywood to the European newcomers and likewise provide the film industry with new material, in terms of both personnel and new ideas or creative subjects.

On the other hand, the pronounced imbalance of power within Salka Viertel's networks was repeatedly evident. It is important to stress this aspect, as the encounters at Viertel's salon were, as already mentioned, apparently not on common ground. The émigré community, which consisted of people who had been mostly successful in their European home countries before their migration, were in the position of a minority in comparison to the people already working in

or leading the film industry. The better the European immigrants adapted to that system, the better they succeeded, as shown by the careers of, for example, Billy Wilder, Gottfried Reinhardt, Hanns Eisler (before his accusations of communistic engagements), and Salka Viertel.

However, failed artistic projects (such as Salka Viertel and Bertolt Brecht's unrealized screenplay or the canceled collaboration between Arnold Schoenberg and Irving Thalberg) as well as biographical ruptures caused by migration (such as the end of Salka Viertel's career as an actress and the break in Helene Weigel's acting career) are at least as interesting to study in this context as they in turn draw attention to untranslatabilities or to situations in which cultural practices were not relatable in a certain space and at a certain time. In this regard, in her article "Perpetual Transformation: Translating Music into New Spaces" Christina Richter-Ibáñez raises the question of whether it is even important to evaluate whether cultural translation succeeds or fails. She moreover asks about the criteria that could be applied in this context: "Is it the commercial success on the present or the historical long-term effect that decides, the emphasis on difference or its leveling? Or is the focus on the description of processes?"<sup>[102]</sup> The reason why the study of Viertel's salon is so rewarding in terms of cultural translation as well as cultural history is that all the listed cases can actually be found in this particular space of translation: great failure as well as the immediate medium for significant commercial success and also historical long-term effects in both positive and negative respects. This structural complexity, which has certainly always been inherent to salon gatherings as such, is in this case once again potentiated by the particular and likewise challenging situation of exile.

## References

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2. See, for example, Marta Feuchtwanger, *An Émigré Life: Munich, Berlin, Sanary, Pacific Palisade, Interviewed by Lawrence M. Weschler* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 3:1260. As can be seen from Marta Feuchtwanger's oral history reports, "émigré community" was a term the circle also used self-referentially. ↑
3. FBI files Berthold Viertel/Salka Viertel, Los Angeles, March 9, 1942. ↑
4. See, for example, FBI files Berthold Viertel/Salka Viertel 1945 (summer). ↑
5. James K. Lyon, "Silent Witness," in *Brecht Handbuch: Prosa, Filme, Drehbücher*, ed. Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), 3:390-95. ↑
6. While there are already many comprehensive studies on European salon culture, especially in the French and German-speaking regions, there are only a few studies on North American salons, which focus primarily on literary salons and, in terms of regional focus, on New England and New York. For current and central publications on salon culture in Europe, see, among others, Anja Bunzel and Natasha Loges, eds., *Musical Salon Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019); Cornelia Klettke and Ralf Pröve, eds., *Brennpunkte kultureller Begegnungen auf dem Weg zu einem modernen Europa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011); "Der Musiksalon," ed. Sabine Meine and Manuela Schwartz, special issue *Die Tonkunst* 4, no. 1 (2010); Rita Unfer Lukoschik, ed., *Der Salon als*



*kommunikations- und transfergenerierender Kulturraum* (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2008); Antoine Lilti, *Le Monde des salons: Sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2005); Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, eds., *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Myriam Chimènes, *Mécènes et Musiciens: Du salon au concert à Paris sous la IIIe République* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Petra Wilhelmy-Dollinger, *Die Berliner Salons: Mit historisch-literarischen Spaziergängen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000); Roberto Simanowski, ed., *Europa: Ein Salon? Beiträge zur Internationalität des literarischen Salons* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999); and Peter Seibert, "Der literarische Salon: Ein Forschungsüberblick," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, Sonderheft 3 (1993): 159–220. For the US context, see, Joan von Mehren, "Margaret Fuller and the Media: Conversations, Salons, and the Press," *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* (2002): 303–17; Philipp Löser, "Der amerikanische Salon am Beispiel der Achse Boston–Paris bis 1850 oder Warum die Salonkultur in den USA nie Fuß fassen konnte," in Simanowski, *Europa: Ein Salon?*, 106–26; Nancy Gaig Simmons, "Margaret Fuller's Boston Conversations: The 1839–1840 Series," *Studies in American Renaissance* (1994): 195–266; Robert M. Crunden, *American Salons: Encounters with European Modernism, 1885–1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Anne Maria Dolan, "The Literary Salon in New York, 1830–1860" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1957). ↑

7. In the FWF research project "[Musical Crossroads: Transatlantic Cultural Exchange 1800–1950](#)" under the supervision of Melanie Unseld, it is precisely these in-between spaces of cultural exchange that are being analyzed by means of examples from two locations: the music store (dissertation project by Clemens Kreutzfeldt) and the music salon (habilitation project by Carola Bebermeier). In specific reference to Salka Viertel, a comprehensive study of her salon is still lacking. I am familiar with an essay from 1980 that deals explicitly with the salon: Bruce Cook, "Salka Viertel: Sundays in Mabery Road," in *Affairs of the Mind: The Salon in Europa and America from the 18th to the 20th Century*, ed. Peter Quennell (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1980), 153–65. Otherwise, the topic is usually addressed more in connection with her biography, such as in Donna Rifkind, *The Sun and Her Stars: Salka Viertel and Hitler's Exiles in the Golden Age of Hollywood* (New York: Other Press, 2020); and Katharina Prager, *"Ich bin nicht gone Hollywood!" Salka Viertel: Ein Leben in Theater und Film* (Vienna: Braumüller, 2007). Furthermore, scholarly publications on Salka Viertel as a person and artist usually come from the field of network research as well as exile research, e.g. Carola Bebermeier and Katharina Prager, "Paarkonstruktionen, Familienkonstellationen und Netzwerke um Salka und Berthold Viertel," in *Paare in Kunst und Wissenschaft*, ed. Christine Fornoff-Petrowski and Melanie Unseld (Cologne: Böhlau, 2021), 251–74; Helga Schreckenberger, "Salka Viertel's Transnational Hollywood Network," in *Networks of Refugees from Nazi Germany*, ed. Helga Schreckenberger (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 161–78; Thomas Blubacher, *Paradies in schwerer Zeit: Künstler und Denker im Exil in Pacific Palisades; Thomas Mann, Vicky Baum, Salka Viertel, Lion Feuchtwanger, Max Reinhardt u.v.a.* (Munich: Elisabeth Sandmann, 2011); Sieglinde Flieder-Lorenzen, "Marta Feuchtwanger, Nelly Mann, Salka Viertel: Drei Schriftstellerehefrauen im Exil 1933–1945" (PhD diss., University of Bonn, 2003); Getraud Steiner, "Wien–Hollywood: Aspekte des kulturellen Transfers am Beispiel von Erich von Stroheim, Josef von Sternheim und Salka Viertel-Steuermann," *Filmkunst* 154 (1997): 18–31; and Maria Klanska, "Emanzipationswege galizischer Jüdinnen im 20. Jahrhundert: Zu den Autobiographien von Ella Schapira, Mischket Liebermann, Helene Deutsch und Salka Viertel," in *Von Franzos zu Canetti: Jüdische Autoren aus Österreich*, ed. Mark H. Gelber (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1996), 141–62. ↑
8. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 53. For further literature on the concepts of cultural exchange and cultural translation, see, for example, Christina Richter-Ibáñez, "Immerwährende Verwandlung: Übersetzung von Musik in neue Räume," in *Musik und Migration: Ein Theorie- und Methodenhandbuch*, ed. Wolfgang Gratzner et al. (Münster, forthcoming); [Stefan Keym and Michael Meyer, MGG Online, s.v. "Musik und Kulturtransfer,"](#) (October 2020), accessed April 8, 2021; Hans-Joachim Gehrke et al., eds., *Kulturelle Übersetzung* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2017); Susan Bassnett, *Translation* (London: Routledge 2014); Wolf Lepenies, "Das Zeitalter der Mobilität und die Übersetzbarkeit von Kulturen," in *Migration und Identität: Wanderbewegungen und Kulturkontakte in der Musikgeschichte*, ed. Sabine Ehrmann-Herford and Silke Leopold (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2013), 11–20; Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, "Der Kulturtransferansatz," in *Zwischen Transfer und Vergleich: Theorien und*

*Methoden der Literatur- und Kulturbeziehungen aus deutsch-französischer Perspektive*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, Christiane Sollte-Gresser, and Manfred Schmeling (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2013), 2750; Peter Burke, *Kultureller Austausch* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 2000); Doris Bachmann-Medick, "Introduction: The Translational Turn," *Translation Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 2–16; and Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, "Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer als Forschungsgegenstand: Eine Problemskizze," in *Transferts: Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIII<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, ed. Michel Espagne and Michael Werner (Paris: Erc/Adpf 1988), 11–34. ↑

9. Cf. Richter-Ibáñez, "Immerwährende Verwandlung," forthcoming. ↑
10. As examples of these fruitful negotiations of personal cultural multiplicity, cf., among others, Hanns Eisler's American studies on film music or Salka Viertel's various screenplays. ↑
11. Bachmann-Medick, "Introduction: Translational Turn," 5, defines cultural brokers as the agents "of concrete translational activities." On the one hand, Salka Viertel established contact between the film industry and the refugee artists and intellectuals. On the other hand, due to her experience and insight into the industry, she was furthermore able to mediate cultural practices and strategies—such as negotiation tactics, but also the development of artistic subjects and projects that potentially could be of interest to the film industry—for (successful) work in Hollywood. ↑
12. Doris Bachmann-Medick, "Translational Turn," in *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture*, ed. Doris Bachmann-Medick (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 188. ↑
13. Salka Viertel, *Das unbelehrbare Herz: Erinnerungen an ein Leben mit Künstlern des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979), 254. ↑
14. For further details on ego-documents as historical source material, see, among others, Winfried Schulze, ed., *Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1996). On the distinction between ego-document and *Selbstzeugnis* (self-testimony), see [Andreas Rutz, "Ego-Dokument oder Ich-Konstruktion? Selbstzeugnisse als Quellen zur Erforschung des frühneuzeitlichen Menschen," \*zeitenblicke\* 1, no. 2 \(2002\): 1–19.](#) ↑
15. As a counterpart to *Traditionsquellen*, Droysen sets non-intentionally produced sources, which he calls *Überrest* (remnant). According to him, they were created for other reasons than giving information to later generations about the present or the past. See, for example, Ernst Opgenoorh and Günther Schulz, *Einführung in das Studium der Neueren Geschichte* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2001), 59. For a critical reading of Droysen's categorization of sources, especially with regard to his gender connotations, see also Melanie Unseld, *Biographie und Musikgeschichte: Wandlungen biographischer Konzepte in Musikkultur und Musikhistoriographie* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014), 50–52. ↑
16. [Rutz, "Ego-Dokument oder Ich-Konstruktion,"](#) 8. Cf. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Autobiographie* (Stuttgart: Metzner 2005); Carola Hilmes, *Das inventarische und das inventorische Ich: Grenzfälle des Autobiographischen* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2000); and Carl Pletsch, "Subjectivity and Biography," in *Introspection in Biography: The Biographer's Quest for Self-Awareness*, ed. Samuel H. Baron and Carl Pletsch (London: Routledge, 1983), 355–61. ↑
17. Salka Viertel, *The Kindness of Strangers* (New York: NYRB Classics, 2019), 1. ↑
18. Melanie Unseld, "Auf dem Weg zu einer memorik-sensibilisierten Geschichtsschreibung: Erinnerungsforschung und Musikwissenschaft," in *Musik mit Methode: Neue kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, ed. Corinna Herr and Monika Woitas (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 67. Original wording: "keine 'Kopien' der Ereignisse, sondern halten fest, wie ein Individuum ein bestimmtes Ereignis erlebt hat." ↑
19. Regina Nörtemann, "Briefkonzepte im 18. Jahrhundert und ihre Genese," in *Brieftheorie des 18. Jahrhunderts: Texte, Kommentare, Essays*, ed. Angelika Ebrecht (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990), 212. ↑
20. Collections analyzed: Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (DLA), manuscript collection, Papers Salka Viertel and Berthold Viertel; Akademie der Künste Berlin, Papers Hanns Eisler, Louise Eisler-Fischer,

Marta Feuchtwanger, Bertolt Brecht, Ruth Berlau, Helene Weigel, Heinrich Mann, and Michael Gielen. [↑](#)

21. See, among others, Claire A. Culleton and Karen Leick, *Modernism on File: Writers, Artists, and the FBI, 1920–1950* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); and Alexander Stephan, *Im Visier der FBI: Deutsche Exilschriftsteller in den Akten amerikanischer Geheimdienste* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995). [↑](#)
22. FBI files Berthold Viertel/Salka Viertel, Los Angeles, March 9, 1942. [↑](#)
23. For a detailed biography of Salka Viertel, see Prager, *Salka Viertel*. [↑](#)
24. Auguste Steuermann, *untitled*, 1943, Akademie der Künste Berlin, Michael-Gielen-Archiv 347 (Familiana). Original wording: “Da mein Mann im politischen Leben der Stadt eine grosse Rolle spielte, kehrten die angesehensten Leute der Stadt und der Adel der Umgebung, sowie viele bedeutende Persönlichkeiten, Universitätsprofessoren u.s.w., aus der benachbarten Hauptstadt Lemberg oft und gern in unserem Hause ein und so unbescheiden es klingt, in unserem Hause konzentrierte sich das gesellschaftliche Leben der Stadt.” [↑](#)
25. Carl Zuckmayer, “Vorwort,” in Viertel, *Das unbelehrbare Herz*, 8. Original wording: “Wychylowka war der Nabel der Welt. ... Ihr [Salka Viertels] Vater war ein großer Herr im Lande und auch von den Nichtjuden als solcher anerkannt; das lag weniger in seinem Vermögen begründet als an der im Hause Wychylowka angestammten und gepflegten Kultur. Es war nicht die hybride Kultur der Emporkömmlinge oder der ‘Oberklasse,’ sondern die des beseelten Lebens, die echte Bildung, welche immer musisch gestimmt, liberal und weltaufgeschlossen ist.” [↑](#)
26. Prager, *Salka Viertel*, 26. [↑](#)
27. Viertel, *Das unbelehrbare Herz*, 90. “In ihrem großen Salon versammelten sich internationale Berühmtheiten, die Hochfinanz und junge Musiker. Busoni ging von Gruppe zu Gruppe, gefolgt von drei kleinen, buckligen Damen, die hoffnungslos in ihn verliebt und unentwegt aufeinander eifersüchtig waren.” [↑](#)
28. In 1923, Berthold and Salka Viertel had realized their professional dream by jointly founding a theater ensemble called “Truppe” in Berlin as a cooperative, avant-garde theater. The idealistic enterprise could not succeed in times of hyperinflation and dissolved just one year later. The Viertels emerged from the experiment with heavy debts, and financially tense years followed until their immigration to the United States. Cf. Prager, *Salka Viertel*, 67–77. [↑](#)
29. Viertel, *Das unbelehrbare Herz*, 145. [↑](#)
30. Prager, *Salka Viertel*, 162. [↑](#)
31. Salka Viertel to Berthold Viertel, April 11, 1933, 78.911/2, K34, A: Viertel, DLA. [↑](#)
32. Peter Viertel, *Dangerous Friends: Hemingway, Huston and others* (London: Viking, 1993), 19. [↑](#)
33. *Ibid.*, 62. [↑](#)
34. Viertel, *Kindness of Strangers*, 137. [↑](#)
35. Viertel, *Dangerous Friends*, 20. [↑](#)
36. Feuchtwanger, *An Émigré Life*, 1188. [↑](#)
37. Viertel, *Dangerous Friends*, 11. [↑](#)
38. Viertel, *Das unbelehrbare Herz*, 254. [↑](#)
39. Christopher Isherwood, *Lost Years: A Memoir 1945–1951* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), 71. [↑](#)
40. It is precisely these contexts and questions that I am studying in my forthcoming habilitation thesis “A World Within A Room? Salon Culture and Music Making in American Homes, 1850–1950.” [↑](#)
41. Since Berthold Viertel spent most of his time from 1930 to 1950 in London and New York for professional

reasons, Salka Viertel lived alone with their children in Los Angeles and was also the family's main financial provider. On this and on the Viertels' life and work partnership, see Bebermeier and Prager, "Paarkonstruktionen." ↑

42. See, for example, the quotation from Carl Zuckmayer, "Vorwort," 8 ([note 25](#)). ↑
43. Berthold Viertel to Salka Viertel, July 1934, DLA 78.864/13. Original wording: "Man sagt, dass Du groß und stark bist, daß Du den Rahmen sprengst, den Rahmen von Hollywood. Alle sagen, Du wärest 'fine' und 'a peach'—und 'grand.' Aber bei allen klingt durch diese Derbheit, die bei den Amerikanern Schamhaftigkeit des Herzens bedeutet oder bedeuten soll, eine große Wärme durch, die sie für Dich haben, und Achtung, Hochachtung, das ist allgemein." Cf. Berthold to Salka Viertel, April 14, 1935, DLA 78.865/5; and Berthold to Salka Viertel, January 10, 1938, DLA 78.868/3. ↑
44. Salka Viertel to Berthold Viertel, September 15, 1931, DLA 78.909/4. Original wording: "Der Eindruck den ich hier auf Menschen mache[,] ist wirklich erstaunlich." ↑
45. Steiner, "Wien-Hollywood," 25. Original wording: "Ihr 'Alte Welt'-Charme, der aus einer versunkenen Welt, der Bourgeoisie Galiziens stammte, das damals zur österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie gehörte, verliehen ihr zweifellos ein besonderes Flair, das sonst in Hollywood nicht zu finden war." ↑
46. Bachmann-Medick, "Introduction: Translational Turn," 9. ↑
47. Viertel, *The Kindness of Strangers*, 143. ↑
48. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 201. ↑
49. See manuscript collection of Salka Viertel's papers at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. ↑
50. An example of cultural translation, or cultural brokership in business negotiations, is the Schoenberg-Thalberg episode, which is outlined below. With regard to suitable Hollywood artistic subjects, on the other hand, Bertolt Brecht repeatedly exchanged ideas with Salka Viertel, and it was in this context that the collaboration on the film script mentioned at the beginning took place. ↑
51. See, for example, Max Reinhardt's son, Gottfried Reinhardt: Berthold Viertel to Salka Viertel, November, 9, 1932, DLA 78.860/21, and Berthold Viertel to Salka Viertel, November 1933, DLA 78.863/7; and composer Karoll Rathaus: Berthold Viertel to Salka Viertel, July 26, 1938, DLA 78.869/1. ↑
52. Bachmann-Medick, "Introduction: Translational Turn," 5. ↑
53. For details on Salka Viertel's transatlantic networks, see Helga Schreckenberger, "Salka Viertel's Network." ↑
54. *Ibid.*, 169–70. ↑
55. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turn*, 201. ↑
56. Christopher Isherwood, *Diaries*, vol. 1, 1939–1960, ed. Katherine Bucknell (London: Harper Collins, 1996), 62. ↑
57. Schreckenberger, "Salka Viertel's Network," 165. Cf. Richard Fine, *Hollywood and the Profession of Authorship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 2021), 29. ↑
58. The cultural alienation of their sons, especially between Berthold Viertel and his sons, which was due to the American school system as well as to new peer groups, was a recurring issue in the correspondence between Berthold and Salka Viertel. See, among others, Salka Viertel to Berthold Viertel, November 10, 1932, DLA 78.910/16: "they have to get out of the American! Especially out of the 'Los Angeles Spirit'—they are sweet and lovely and have to become great men." Original wording: "sie müssen aus dem Amerikanischen heraus! Besonders aus dem 'Los Angeles Spirit'—sie sind lieb und reizend und müssen großartige Männer werden." ↑
59. On working with and analyzing artists' anecdotes, see Melanie Unseld and Christian von Zimmermann, eds., *Anekdote—Biographie—Kanon: Zur Geschichtsschreibung in den schönen Künsten* (Cologne:

Böhlau, 2013). [↑](#)

60. Viertel, *Dangerous Friends*, 60. [↑](#)
61. Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture as Praxis* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), xlviii. [↑](#)
62. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 312. [↑](#)
63. Rifkind, *The Sun and Her Stars*, 181–85. [↑](#)
64. *Ibid.*, 184. [↑](#)
65. On the critical analysis of autobiographies as historical sources, see notes [14](#), [15](#), and [16](#). [↑](#)
66. Feuchtwanger, *An Émigré Life*, 1189. [↑](#)
67. Viertel, *Kindness of Strangers*, 206. [↑](#)
68. *Ibid.*, 208. [↑](#)
69. Rifkind, *The Sun and Her Stars*, 184. [↑](#)
70. 2nd Eisler-Bunge conversation, April 13, 1958, Collection Eisler 7266, AdK Berlin. Original wording: “Berthold Viertel der außerordentliche Regisseur und Dichter von Rang, dem ging es ganz hunde-elend in Hollywood. Das war ganz entsetzlich!” [↑](#)
71. Berthold Viertel to Salka Viertel, April 16, 1933, DLA 78.862/18. Original wording: “Offenkundig bin ich der Brutalität dieser Maschine, der Mentalität dieser Maschinenmenschen nicht gewachsen, nicht fähig, mich durchzusetzen.” [↑](#)
72. Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947). On the creation of the work, see, among others, Johannes C. Gall, *Eisler goes Hollywood: Das Buch “Komposition für den Film” und die Filmmusik zu “Hangmen also Die”* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2015). [↑](#)
73. Richter-Ibáñez, “Immerwährende Verwandlung,” forthcoming. [↑](#)
74. *Ibid.* [↑](#)
75. Bauman, *Culture as Praxis*, xlviii. [↑](#)
76. Salka Viertel to Berthold Viertel, November 11, 1935, DLA 78.913/3. [↑](#)
77. Isherwood, *Diaries*, 425. [↑](#)
78. *Ibid.*, 62. [↑](#)
79. Viertel, *Kindness of Strangers*, 259. [↑](#)
80. David Metzger, “The New York Reception of *Pierrot lunaire*: The 1923 Premiere and Its Aftermath,” in *Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 689. [↑](#)
81. Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1940–1943*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1982), 152 (September 22, 1940). [↑](#)
82. For extensive research on the Hollywood Songbook by Hanns Eisler, see, among others, James Parsons, “Hanns Eisler’s *Hollywooder Liederbuch* and ‘The New Stuff of Life,’” in *The Impact of Nazism on Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Erik Levi (Vienna: Böhlau, 2014), 91–102; Stanley E. Workman, “Hanns Eisler and His Hollywood Songbook: A Survey of the ‘Five Elegies’ (Fünf Elegien) and the ‘Hölderlin Fragments’ (Hölderlin Fragmente)” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2010); Dorothee Schubel, “Lieder der Emigranten: Eduard Steuermann und Hanns Eisler komponieren Gedichte von Bertolt Brecht,” in: *Querstand 5–6: Hanns Eisler*, ed. Albrecht Dümling (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld, 2010), 93–112; Markus Roth, *Der Gesang als Asyl: Analytische Studien zu Hanns Eislers “Hollywood-Liederbuch”* (Hofheim: Wolke, 2007); Claudia Albert, *Das schwierige Handwerk des Hoffens: Hanns Eislers “Hollywooder Liederbuch”* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991); and Wolfgang Hufschmidt, *Willst Du zu meinen Liedern deine Leier drehn? Zur*



83. Maren Bagge, "Favourite Songs: Populäre englische Musikkultur im langen 19. Jahrhundert" (PhD diss., University of Hannover, 2020), 90. ↑
84. 2nd Eisler-Bunge conversation, April 13, 1958. Original wording: "Das war in diesem trübsinnigen, ewigen Frühling von Hollywood sagte ich Brecht[,] kurze Zeit als wir uns wieder zusammenfanden in Amerika: Das ist der klassische Ort[,] wo man Elegien schreiben muss! Es gibt die Römischen Elegien von Goethe, die eines meiner Lieblingswerke sind, die Brecht auch sehr bewundert hat, und wir müssen da jetzt auch irgendetwas schaffen; man ist nicht ungestraft in Hollywood, man muss das einfach beschreiben. Und Brecht versprach das auch zu machen und brachte mir dann, ich glaube, 8 Hollywooder Elegien. ... Nun dazu ist nicht viel zu sagen, ich habe sie dann komponiert und dann oft zur Ergötzung Brechts und meiner Freunde zuhause vorgetragen. ... Ich schrieb fast jeden Tag, manchmal auch mehr, zumindest ein Lied, nach einem Text von Brecht oder etwas anderes z.B. Hölderlin oder andere Sachen z.B. Pascal und in eine große Mappe schrieb ich drauf 'Hollywooder Liederbuch' oder 'Hollywooder Tagebuch' daran erinner' ich mich nicht mehr, und sagte, das ist so meinen Zeitvertreib. Das war so was ich neben der Arbeit machte. Denn dafür schrieb ich ja ganz andere Sachen in Hollywood—Orchesterwerke, meist Orchesterwerke." ↑
85. In scholarship, the number of songs included in the *Hollywood Songbook* varies from about 40 to 200 songs. Recently, however, the classification of 47 songs, such as Manfred Grabs did in the 2008 edition of Bretkopf & Härtel, has become more common: Hanns Eisler, *Hollywood Songbook—Hollywood Liederbuch*, ed. Manfred Grabs et al. (Wiesbaden: Bretkopf & Härtel, 2008). ↑
86. See, for example, Bertolt Brecht, *Journale 2: 1941–1955* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995), 109 (June 29, 1942), 115 (July 26, 1942), 125 (September 20, 1942), 125 (October 3, 1942), 152 (June 8, 1943), and 154 (June 25, 1943). ↑
87. Ibid., 115 (July 26, 1942). Original wording: "Für mich ist seine Vertonung, was für Stücke eine Aufführung ist: der Text. Er liest mit enormer Genauigkeit. In dem letzterwähnten Gedicht polemisiert er gegen das Wort 'Werk' und ist erst zufrieden, als ich es mit 'Gedicht' oder 'Vers' ersetzte. In dem Gedicht 'In den Weiden am Sund' streicht er 'über die Herrschenden,' da ihm das Gedicht so reiner erscheint." ↑
88. Berthold Viertel, *Der Lebenslauf: Gedichte* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1947), 38. Translation: "Californian Autumn / The ladder still remained under the fig tree, / But it is yellow and has long since been eaten empty / Of beaks and of mouths, who succeeded first. / The next summer will see it green and heavily loaded, / And may peace come in the meantime, / May it be someone else who picks the figs here. / We would then have gone home to colder latitudes: / No fig tree grows there, and at most the wine, / Yes, apples, pears, cherries, although not lemons. / Nevertheless, children thrive with red cheeks, / And if snow falls, we will be all the fresher / And like to live in the winter that has become free again." ↑
89. Bertolt Brecht, *Sammlungen 1938–1956* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1988), 116. Translation: "Every morning, to earn my daily bread / I go to the market where lies are sold. / Hopefully / I take my place among the sellers." ↑
90. 2nd Eisler-Bunge conversation, April 13, 1958. Original wording: "Es ist erstaunlich wie in 4 Zeilen eine ganze Sache aufgerissen wird. Die Knappheit hat Brecht dann auch in anderen Sachen übernommen. ... Diese entsetzliche Idylle dieser Landschaft, die ja an und für sich des Gehirns der Bodenspekulation entsprungen ist, weil die Landschaft an sich ja überhaupt nichts hergibt. ... In dieser seltsamen, getünchten Idylle muss man sich ja auch knapp ausdrücken. Man leidet ja in diesem ungeheuerlichen ozeanischen Klima an einer fehlenden Konzentration. Brecht beklagte sich auch gesundheitlich, es wäre ihm alles zu lau und zu milde und es gäbe keine Unterschiede zwischen den Jahreszeiten und diese ewige Blumenblüherei war ihm auch schon zum Kotzen. Er war ganz verbittert darüber. Das führte ihn auch zu diesem ganz knappen und konzisen Stil als Gegengift. Da darf man sich auf keinen Fall so gehen



lassen, wenn die Luft so mild ist[,] meinte er." [↑](#)

91. Ehrhard Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 79. [↑](#)
92. Ibid., 83. On the concept of heterotopia, see Michel Foucault, *Die Heterotopien: Der utopische Körper; zwei Radiovorträge* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005); and his "Andere Räume," in *Aisthesis: Wahrnehmung heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik*, ed. Karlheinz Barck et al. (Leipzig: Reclam, 1992), 34–46. [↑](#)
93. Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific*, 103. [↑](#)
94. FBI files Berthold Viertel/Salka Viertel, March 9, 1942. [↑](#)
95. Steiner, "Wien-Hollywood," 25. [↑](#)
96. FBI files Berthold Viertel/Salka Viertel, February 12, 1943. [↑](#)
97. On Salka and Berthold Viertel's complex life and work relationship, see Bebermeier and Prager, "Paarkonstruktionen." [↑](#)
98. Ibid. Homosexual writer Christopher Isherwood lived temporarily as a subtenant in Mabery Road; furthermore, there was repeated speculation that Salka Viertel and Greta Garbo were connected not only by friendship but also by a love affair. On the relationship between Greta Garbo and Salka Viertel, see Prager, *Salka Viertel*, 127–220. [↑](#)
99. Salka Viertel to Berthold Viertel, August 1, 1953, DLA 78.919/10. Cf. Prager, *Salka Viertel*, 251. [↑](#)
100. John Houseman, *Unfinished Business: A Memoir* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1986), 336. [↑](#)
101. David Thomson, *The Whole Equation: A History of Hollywood* (London: Vintage, 2006), 20. [↑](#)
102. Richter-Ibáñez, "Immerwährende Verwandlung," forthcoming. Original wording: "Entscheidet der kommerzielle Erfolg in der Gegenwart oder die historische Langzeitwirkung, die Betonung von Differenz oder deren Nivellierung? Oder steht die Beschreibung der Prozesse im Vordergrund?" [↑](#)

Cover picture: Salka Viertel at the Brecht family home in Santa Monica (1945/46), photograph by Ruth Berlau; Akademie der Künste Berlin, Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, Fotoarchiv 08/130 © by Ruth Berlau/Hoffmann.