

Introduction

*California Haunting: Mann,
Schoenberg, Faustus*

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Thomas Mann arrives in Los Angeles in 1940, eventually settling at 1550 San Remo Drive. By May of 1943 he begins to outline *Doctor Faustus*, writing to Bruno Walter about a novel “about pathological-illegitimate inspiration” and asking how to research composition training and music history. By May 8 his main character has the name “Leverkühn” and by May 17 the first name “Adrian.” Mann begins writing his first chapter on May 23, 1943, the same date as the novel’s narrator, Serenus Zeitblom, begins to tell Leverkühn’s story.

Mann meets Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno in July 1943 at a dinner party hosted by Adorno’s erstwhile colleague at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, Max Horkheimer. By October he has asked Adorno to supply him with “musical intimacy and characteristic detail”¹ for the *Faustus* project; over the next few years, Adorno writes fictional critical texts, descriptions of Mann’s protagonist’s fictional music, and descriptions of composition technique for Mann. Mann finishes the book on January 29, 1947, and celebrates final edits in February 1947, “with a champagne dinner to celebrate the completion of *Faustus*, and a reading of the Echo-chapter” to a “visibly seized” audience.²

The German edition appears with Fischer Verlag in 1947. In January of 1948 Mann sends a copy to Schoenberg with the inscription: “For Arnold Schoenberg, the *real one* [dem *Eigentlichen*], with best wishes” (see image on page 105 of this volume). Schoenberg never reads the entire novel because of his failing eyesight.³ Nevertheless, in February he responds with a literary parody imagining a third-millennium historian, “Hugo Tribsamen,” writing about a now-forgotten musician named Arnold Schoenberg and his “battle with the well-known German writer Thomas Mann, who was clearly the inventor of the method of composing with

twelve tones." Mann replies immediately that his portrait constituted "no diminution of your place in history." Mann agrees to append a note acknowledging Schoenberg's role and his fictionalization of it to the US translation by Helen Lowe-Porter.

By March of 1948 the controversy spills out into the press—somewhat ironically precisely because of Mann's note and his personal dedication. Schoenberg and his camp think the note insufficient and the dedication's reference to "the real one" an indicator that Schoenberg is the model for the novel's syphilitic stand-in for Nazi Germany, which Schoenberg considers "an insult," one for which he "might have to draw consequences." Aline Valangin publishes an attack on *Faustus* in the Swiss periodical *Unsere Meinung*. And in a November 1948 letter to the *Saturday Review of Literature*, Schoenberg reaffirms his sense that "in his novel *Dr. Faustus*, Thomas Mann has taken advantage of my literary property," and he fingers Adorno as "the informer" who has helped in Mann's theft. At this point Mann has already completed *The Story of a Novel*, his own account of the writing of *Doctor Faustus*. This document, an attempt to set the record straight in a number of respects, becomes the subject of a tug-of-war between Adorno, who would like his contributions recognized, and Katia and Erika Mann, who can't stand Adorno and wants the same contributions minimized.

This introductory essay is not intended to provide a definitive version of events nor to offer a conclusive interpretation of them. There are already many impressive attempts to do that.⁴ The essay intends instead to guide readers through the thicket of acquaintances, old grudges and new anxieties, problems of politics and aesthetics that resonate—sometimes faintly, sometimes clearly—between the lines in the essays and exchanges gathered here. These are, after all, one reason scholars, students, and lay readers have returned to the *Faustus* controversy time and time again. The other is that rarely has a literary controversy spoken so directly to a unique place and time: *Faustus* could not have been written, and *Faustus* could not have generated the controversy that it did, outside of the highly peculiar setting of Southern California during the Second World War.

The *Faustus* affair pitted a writer whose dominant stature in German letters had translated smoothly into his new American environs against a composer who feared he had lost his relevance in the transition. The controversy surrounded a book that created a fictional portrait of a composer corrupted by fascism, at a time when the Nazis were parading vicious caricatures of "degenerate" composers before German audiences. Caught in the middle stood then-unknown Theodor Adorno, captivated by both men but with a desire to please, to make a name for himself, and to have the great

writer channel his ideas, which only added fuel to the fire. Southern California may be the invisible fourth party in their dispute. That world, the positions Mann, Schoenberg, and Adorno occupied in it, and the different paths that took them there, will be my topic in what follows.

THREE ROADS INTO EXILE

The main story laid out by the letters, diary entries, lectures, and articles collected in this volume begins in 1933. On January 30 of that year Adolf Hitler became Reich Chancellor. After the burning of the Reichstag on February 27, the “Enabling Laws” of March 1933 dissolved parliament and gave Hitler dictatorial powers. The reprisals against unions and left-wing organizations, as well as the boycotts of Jewish businesses, commenced almost immediately. Even before the “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service” and other laws enabled, and later mandated, the firing of Jewish employees, many cultural institutions, working, as Ian Kershaw put it, “towards the *Führer*,”⁵ purged their “non-Aryan” members.

By the summer, many of Germany’s Jews and anti-Nazi intellectuals who could afford it were considering emigration. Almost five hundred thousand German citizens would take the opportunity while it lasted. Many of them were writers, artists, critics, and intellectuals, and among them were Thomas Mann (1875–1955), Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951), and Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1903–69). Hitler’s rise to power caught each of these three men at different stages of their lives and careers, and each reacted differently to it. And even though their biographies would coincide in broad outlines over the next decade and a half—opposition to Nazism, flight from Germany, exile in Los Angeles—their first few months under Hitler’s “Third Reich” suggest just how differently they responded to similar circumstances.

Schoenberg, after a few months’ hesitation, left his post at the Prussian Academy in May 1933, in what was initially supposed to be a leave of absence. The letter in which the new president of the Academy, Max von Schillings, granted that leave left little doubt that Schoenberg would soon be fired.⁶ Schoenberg left first for Paris, later for Arcachon in southwestern France, but by the summer he had taken decisive steps toward a new life. He formally returned to his Jewish faith in July; he decided to help found a United Jewish Party; and in September he declared his intention to emigrate to the United States. Compared to Adorno, his break with Germany was thorough and complete. Schoenberg arrived in New York in October of 1933 but soon found himself deeply disappointed by opportunities there. In

September of 1934 he moved his family to Pasadena, then to Hollywood. In 1936 he would settle in Brentwood Park. Before long, the two other protagonists of the *Faustus* affair would settle nearby.

Thomas Mann was at the height of his fame when the Nazis came to power. He had received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929; he lived in patrician splendor in Munich; and, after abandoning long-held conservative views, had become an outspoken defender of the moribund Weimar Republic. As such, he was caught almost immediately in the new regime's crosshairs, and his children, above all Erika and Klaus Mann, made sure he never made any overture to Germany's new government. He had declared the Nazis a "massive wave of eccentric barbarism" as early as 1930. When Hitler became chancellor, Mann gave one last scheduled lecture (on Richard Wagner, appropriately enough) and then left Germany for a lecture tour. He would not return until 1949.

After settling in Switzerland, Mann traveled to the United States for lecture tours in 1934 and 1935. The National Socialists had stripped him of his German citizenship, but so great was the interest in his person in the United States that he was allowed in even without a passport—during a period in which many "stateless" persons were desperately trying to make it to America. In 1938 he relocated permanently, settling in Princeton, New Jersey. Lecture tours, honorary doctorates, and radio and newspaper interviews kept him busy, and his novels sold well. Once war broke out, Mann lent his voice to the BBC program *Deutsche Hörer!* From his Pacific Palisades home he recorded appeals, eventually broadcast from London, to the German civilian population. When Mann arrived in Southern California in 1941, he was at the zenith of his influence.

When Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno arrived, it was for him the latest in a series of setbacks that had—for a time, at least—cut short a promising academic career. Adorno was twenty-nine years old when the Nazis came to power. Both a musical and intellectual prodigy, he had completed his dissertation at twenty-one years of age, then moved to Vienna to study composition with Alban Berg. Although he became a constant companion to Berg, even during this musical apprenticeship his main interest was clearly aesthetics. In 1927 he made a first attempt to receive the *venia legendi* (license to teach), but his "habilitation" was rejected. He eventually received his license in early 1931 with a book on Kierkegaard⁷ and seemed on the cusp of a burgeoning scholarly career. Then came Hitler.

Adorno's book on Kierkegaard appeared in print one day before the Enabling Laws granted Hitler dictatorial powers. He was denied teaching privileges that spring, and his license to teach was officially revoked on his thirtieth

birthday, September 11, 1933. During this period Adorno tried desperately to find a way to survive in German academia (applying to the Reich Chamber of Literature, which unsurprisingly was unreceptive) and, most notably, changing his last name from Wiesengrund to his mother's name, Adorno. Hannah Arendt, no fan of Adorno's ("no way he's coming into my home"⁸), was sure that he had changed his name as a "vain attempt to get out of [Nazi persecution] with the name of his mother who was of Italian origin."⁹ Schoenberg never went quite so far, but the fact that he kept calling Adorno "Wiesengrund" throughout the altercation seems less than accidental.¹⁰

His biographers all insist that this "shaving off" (as the poet Christian Morgenstern caustically referred to it) of "Wiesengrund" was being misinterpreted. But Adorno, younger and unknown, certainly had fewer international prospects than either Schoenberg or Mann: leaving the German-speaking world meant starting over. Adorno was able to secure a position at Merton College Oxford, where he attempted to undertake research for a PhD—surely a bitter pill to swallow for a man who had been a university professor before he was thirty. In 1938 Adorno and his wife, Gretel, moved to New York, where his friend and former colleague Max Horkheimer had refounded the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research under the auspices of Columbia University. When Horkheimer moved to Pacific Palisades in 1940, the Adornos, who were largely dependent on Horkheimer's money, quickly followed, settling at 316 Kenter Avenue in Brentwood.¹¹

Adorno came to California still a young man denied the recognition he believed he deserved. Thomas Mann arrived as a literary elder statesman, displaced and melancholy but convinced of his role and his mission. As the critic Ludwig Marcuse put it, Mann was the "emperor among the German émigrés."¹² Schoenberg was a little bit of both—convinced of his importance and anxious at the relative lack of recognition afforded him in his new home. He complained at length about his reception, but he was also pleased by what recognition he did receive. Recent studies by Sabine Feisst and Kenneth H. Marcus suggest that the image of a profoundly alienated Schoenberg misses the mark.¹³ Nevertheless, he settled into his new environs only with a certain unease, and his sensitivity to slights and neglect increased. *Faustus* would trigger both.

The *Faustus* affair brought together three men whose very different experience of the same events brought them into perhaps inevitable conflict. All three men were wrapped up in deeply incongruous self-conceptions, and each nevertheless insisted on arrogating expertise in each other's fields. Mann was quite comfortable weighing in on music, a field where his taste was out of step with his time; Adorno insisted on feeding Mann a

philosophical vocabulary that Mann spilled half-digested onto the page; and Schoenberg didn't seem interested in parsing out the ways in which the terminology with which Adorno operated in embedding Schoenberg's compositions into a story of modernity would differ from the terminology he used when teaching his students.

Yet the individual misunderstandings and grievances that gave rise to *l'affaire Faustus* nevertheless shed light on broader political and aesthetic questions: for one thing, the category of modernism circulates uneasily among the three men, without ever being invoked directly. Mann's stature in the United States rested to some extent on the fact that his more modest, gentler modernism was palatable to larger swaths of the public than were Schoenberg's twelve-tone compositions. His portrait of the composer Adrian Leverkühn—who pushes his art by means of a devil's pact toward ever more rarefied, but ever less hospitable, aesthetic spheres—constitutes to some extent late romanticism's judgment of the aesthetic of modernism. Adorno's whisperings, by contrast, were at times critical of Schoenberg but came from a place that was thoroughly and emphatically modernist, advocating what he would later call a music that was not just “distressed” but also “distressing.”¹⁴

Doctor Faustus is a novel about a kind of modernism characterized by formal innovation and experimental rigor, one that the novel itself pointedly avoids.¹⁵ Mann's modernism turns on the way categories like self, authenticity, and expression become subtly problematic in his novels without ever being abandoned. His desire to look *as though* he was saying something about music, and his concomitant desire to *actually* say something about music, was what made him turn to Adorno and what roused Schoenberg's ire. This led to the paradoxical situation that, once Schoenberg objected to Mann's ways of absorbing it all into his massive novel, Mann withdrew into a skin-deep defense of a “montage technique”—the ultimately conventional storyteller pleading modernism to the inventor of twelve-tone composition.

Mann viewed form in a way that spoke to Adorno's own aesthetic position: distended by the pressure of subjective expression yet left standing, a way of doing inevitable, necessary, and yet deeply troubling violence to the material. Schoenberg tended to view expression through form fairly unproblematically—which is why the violence that *Doctor Faustus* imputes to the twelve-tone method must have rankled him and his students. Above it all hovered the question of fascism: the notion that the violence with which form wrestled content into shape might have something to do with real-world violence became one of Adorno's overriding ideas, and it is likely that it shaped his contributions to Mann's portrait of Leverkühn.

WEIMAR BY THE PACIFIC

For the refugees from Nazi Germany, the United States was rarely the first stop, but as the Nazis expanded their reign of terror, it became one of the last safe havens. While some emigrants ended up in the United Kingdom, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, or Russia, more and more opted for the United States. Many who wanted to come didn't make it or were overtaken by the Nazi onslaught in Europe. The novelist Ernst Weiss watched the German troops march down the Champs Elysees from his hotel room, lay down in his bathtub, and slit his wrists. The critic Walter Benjamin took poison when it became clear he would not make it across the French border into Spain.

Most of the scientists, and many of the artists and intellectuals who left Germany, made the US East Coast their new home—Princeton, New Jersey, for instance, or New York City. Those who had trouble making ends meet on the East Coast—writers writing in a language few around them understood, musicians with repertoires that seemed alien on Broadway, philosophers working on questions rarely pondered at American universities—moved on to California. Between ten thousand and twenty thousand émigrés from central Europe would eventually make their home in Los Angeles by 1945, about 70 percent of them Jewish.¹⁶

They were new arrivals in a city of new arrivals. Between 1920 and 1940 the population of Los Angeles almost tripled. The massive expansion of housing stock and new developments, the comparatively low cost of living, and above all the siren call of the entertainment industry made it a preferred destination for Weimar intellectuals, artists, and writers. Twenty thousand people in a city of 1.5 million did not constitute a massive community, but like most immigrants, the central Europeans tended to cluster: in Santa Monica, Pacific Palisades, Brentwood, Westwood, and Hollywood, often in close proximity to each other.

Some of the credit for this concentration may rest with the realtors of Los Angeles, who seem to have been keen to match like with like. In an interview, Max Horkheimer recalled that on his arrival in 1940, a realtor showed him a house and, as realtors do, launched into praise of the neighborhood. Just recently, the realtor explained, another house had been sold to another gentleman from Germany—"a Mr. Mann." The sheer density of German luminaries could be truly staggering. Among the literati there were the Mann brothers, world-famous Thomas and increasingly luckless Heinrich, Lion Feuchtwanger, Vicki Baum, and Franz Werfel with his wife, Alma Mahler-Werfel. Bertolt Brecht arrived from the Soviet Union in

1941, disposing of his edition of Lenin's collected works somewhere in Los Angeles harbor before making landfall.¹⁷

Music, too, was well represented: German exiles like Hanns Eisler, Eric Zeisl, and Ernst Toch joined European émigrés like Igor Stravinsky. Transplants, like Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Franz Waxman, shaped the emerging sound of Hollywood. Conductors like Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer had settled in Southern California. Whereas the German emigrants across the United States represented something of a cross-section of the German professional classes, the group that came to concentrate in Southern California was particular. Scientists and academics were underrepresented; artists and creative types of all stripes were overrepresented. This was partly due to Hollywood—about two thousand members of Germany's burgeoning film industry resettled in California.¹⁸ The cultural stature and the sheer concentration of intellectual heft gave the western enclave its luster. Here, some of the most austere exponents of central European culture lived under palm trees by the beach.

At least some of the mythic stature that this "Weimar on the Pacific" has in the German-speaking world today, it acquired in the immediate postwar period, when a deeply shamed German intelligentsia cast about for an uncorrupted chapter of German cultural history from which to derive legitimacy. When Thomas Mann visited the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research in 1952, Adorno wrote a quick welcome speech for director Max Horkheimer, full of swaying palm trees and Pacific breezes (Horkheimer declined to deliver it). This world, thousands of miles removed from the compromised proponents of "inner emigration," offered an easy point of orientation for postwar Germans—the Germany they liked to remember was gathered here in the same cluster of neighborhoods, a standing reserve of tradition and legitimacy for the new German states.

A sense of amazement at this little colony of arts and learning pervades the writings of the protagonists themselves. Mann marvels in June 1943 at "how many musicians, virtuosi and composers have made their way here. At the moment I'm actively trying to spend time with them, so that I can learn a little."¹⁹ Schoenberg, too, was taken in by his new home. The very place seemed to him almost hyperreal: "It is Switzerland, the Riviera, the Vienna woods, the desert, the Salzkammergut, Spain, Italy—everything in one place."²⁰ There are statements to similar effect from just about all of the exiles: as Schoenberg does here, the places they list are mostly vacation spots rather than places where they had lived. Not only was California less-than-real; so was being there.

The diaries and letters of the period give the impression of an expatriate community that, though far from insular, was distinct from the city around it. Mann's diaries are full of walks along the shore in Santa Monica and movies in Malibu. He corresponds with editors, journalists, and academics across the United States. But the dinners he hosts and attends seem largely to comprise European exiles—not necessarily famous ones, not necessarily German ones, but recent arrivals like him. The Werfels, Franz and Alma, are a constant presence, and so are the Horkheimers, Marcuses, and Feuchtwangers.

Some of the infrastructure for the German community in which Mann circulated had been created by earlier, more voluntary, transplants: Salka Viertel's soirees are a mainstay in his diaries. Salka was the wife of director Berthold Viertel, an Austrian avant-garde film director who had come to Hollywood in 1928 and found success with Paramount Pictures and Warner Bros.²¹ Mann and Schoenberg met at a "musical soiree" at her house in Santa Monica Canyon in September 1940. In his diaries Mann notes that there was a "great crowd"²² (*großer Kreis*), and even though he doesn't specify, other diary entries give us an idea of the sheer caliber of cultural luminaries gathered on Mabery Road: Mann, Schoenberg, Brecht, Feuchtwanger, and the Werfels would rub shoulders with Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden, Charlie Chaplin, and Igor Stravinsky.²³

But if some unusual friendships appear to have blossomed under the California sun, other relationships never quite transcend the divisions thrown up in a long-vanished Old World. And it seems to have been perfectly easy to avoid one another even in a community as tight-knit as the German cultural expatriates. Thomas Mann and fellow novelist Alfred Döblin, for instance, had had many disagreements back in Europe. Döblin arrived in Los Angeles in 1940 and left in 1945, and although Mann's tone toward him softens a bit during these five years (tensions would flare once again postwar), the two writers seem to have met exactly once during their time in California: at Heinrich Mann's seventieth birthday party.

But the hagiographic depiction of "Weimar on the Pacific," so common after the war, misses another set of feelings that runs through the letters and diaries of the period. In his 1945 novel *Prater Violet*, the British expat writer Christopher Isherwood erected a literary monument to Berthold Viertel. "You cannot know what it is like to be an exile, a perpetual stranger," the novel's Viertel stand-in, Bergmann, tells the narrator. "I am bitterly ashamed that I am here, in safety."²⁴ The cognitive dissonance between the idyllic enclaves by the Pacific Ocean and the intensifying horror back home was enormous. The geographic distance kept the war at a remove, but its

irruptions into everyday life were constant and surreal. In September of 1940 Mann notes the “sad news about torpedoing of a British ship full of children headed for Canada” at the hands of a German U-boat, only to learn days later that his own daughter was on the ship in question, the SS *City of Benares*, and that his son-in-law had drowned in the sinking.

The émigrés themselves experienced the seemingly marvelous concentration of talent and intellect as less than idyllic. While some of them thrived in their new home, others struggled; bitterness and competition were inevitable. In *The Magic Mountain*, Mann describes the “great petulance” and “nameless impatience” that take hold of the cloistered residents of an alpine sanatorium.²⁵ A similar irritability, it seemed, circulated along the beaches and hills of Southern California.

In his recent *The Rest Is Noise*, the music critic Alex Ross framed his story of modern music in exile around an incident Marta Feuchtwanger reported. Shopping at the Brentwood Country Mart, she found herself accosted by an irate Arnold Schoenberg, who, she claimed, insisted unbidden that “you have to know, I never had syphilis.”²⁶ It is telling that in Feuchtwanger’s recollection Schoenberg never explains that he is referring to *Doctor Faustus*, to Mann’s syphilitic protagonist, Leverkühn. Perhaps more remarkably, he never has to. Proximity bred irritation, not just when it came to *Faustus*. “I feel here as if I were in Tahiti,” Brecht wrote, “surrounded by palm trees and artists, it makes me nervous.”²⁷ Like so many émigrés, Mann, Schoenberg, and Adorno had experienced their exile as a precipitous drop in prestige and above all audience—the threat of oblivion crept up on each of them differently, but it crept up on them all.

Much of the cultural production of those years is safely part of the literary canon in Germany today but is forgotten in the country where it actually originated. This can obscure the fact that many of the German exiles found considerable success in their adopted country. The composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold, who arrived in 1934 to write film soundtracks for Warner Bros., found immense success, recognition, and wealth. The novelist Lion Feuchtwanger was able to purchase the Villa Aurora in Pacific Palisades from selling the movie rights to his works. Franz Werfel’s novel *The Song of Bernadette*, published in German in 1941 and in English in 1942, spent more than a year on the *New York Times* best-seller list and became a hit movie that won four Academy Awards.

Some of this was luck, or willingness to meet the new environment, above all the Hollywood studios, halfway. But some of it was uncomfortably bound up with questions of aesthetics. While a crowd-pleasing director

like Fritz Lang, a realist author like Werfel, or a composer with musical theater credibility like Kurt Weill could find immense and immediate success, those whose aesthetics were more clearly avant-garde, or more proximately tied to the specific concerns and traditions of the German-speaking world, often found it hard to gain footing.

Alfred Döblin, fêted author of the massive *Berlin, Alexanderplatz*, labored in relative obscurity as a script doctor. Bertolt Brecht found himself humiliated by having to

go to the market where lies are bought.
Hopefully
I take up my place among the sellers.²⁸

And Thomas Mann's own brother, Heinrich, whose work had been adapted into hit movies during the Weimar years, found it impossible to work in the studio system; around the same time as Thomas moved into his final California villa, his brother had to cancel his membership in the Screen Writers' Guild because he could no longer afford the ten-dollar membership fee.²⁹ In his *Hollywood Elegies* Brecht described the artist's work in this "dreadful idyll" as akin to prostitution:

Under the green pepper trees
Musicians walk the streets in pairs
With writers.³⁰

Mann's work wore its modernism extremely lightly. His prolix, ironic, stately prose translated well and seemed ready-made for global relevance. And his US publishers seemed intent on giving his books an even less avant-garde tint. When *Lotte in Weimar* was to appear in English in 1940, the book was to have an advance run of twenty-five thousand copies. Alfred A. Knopf insisted that the book be published with the title *The Beloved Returns*—the proper names were not the problem, but the "phonetic difficulty customers would have in asking for [*Lotte in Weimar*] in a bookshop."³¹ Mann thought the title was overly sentimental but was mollified once the German title was kept on as the book's subtitle. Paul Rosenfeld, reviewing the novel for the *Saturday Review of Literature*, praised it as "graceful, scintillant," but lamented its "unfortunate title."³²

Rosenfeld's reaction speaks to the fraught role aesthetics played even for as widely recognized an artist as Mann. To really succeed in the American market, Mann had to assent to a sentimental, melodramatic version of his title, which a bona fide modernist like Rosenfeld, once a close collaborator of Sherwood Anderson and Randolph Bourne, could not quite get on board with.³³ Whether it was Hollywood or Broadway, the émigrés were often

avant-gardists working on less-than-avant-garde fare. "This was movie-work, hack-work," Isherwood has his narrator say in *Prater Violet*. "It was something essentially false, cheap, vulgar. It was beneath me."³⁴

The elite of German culture had an intense distrust of what Adorno and Horkheimer in the fourth chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* would call the "culture industry." Now they were living in what was arguably the capital of that industry, and much of their income came from what Brecht dubbed "the market where lies are sold."³⁵ Being repulsed by lies and illusion was of course more than a matter of preference for the émigrés. Having witnessed the ends to which Joseph Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry had put popular entertainment in Nazi Germany, they were deeply suspicious of what damage ideology could do. Adorno, in particular, spared nary an aspect of American culture of his suspicious gaze: back east he had studied anti-Semitic preachers for the Radio Research Project and the Rockefeller Foundation. In California he searched for the origins of fascism in the astrology columns of the *LA Times* and the "perennial fashion" of big band jazz.

Brecht lamented that "here art is ashamed of its usefulness, but not its exchange value."³⁶ But Schoenberg, too, inveighed against the materialism he saw dominating his new city, which, he wrote in a fund-raising appeal for the LA Philharmonic, "seems to endanger the whole sphere of spiritual culture."³⁷ At the same time, they very much partook of the cultural life of their adoptive country. Even the most mandarin among them were not automatic in their rejection of American popular culture. This was particularly true of the musicians. As Kenneth Marcus has written, so thorough was the interpenetration between elite musicians and the Hollywood studio system, that strict borders "between classical and popular music . . . had less of a place in the diversified environment of modern music in the region."³⁸

In *Minima Moralia* Adorno wrote: "Repudiation of the present cultural morass presupposes sufficient involvement in it to feel it itching in one's finger-tips."³⁹ Decades later he would frequently recall how Charlie Chaplin watched him embarrass himself at a party and imitated him⁴⁰—in one of his lectures he would even call it "the greatest honor of my life." Besides, there was plenty of high culture that the émigrés believed they had to reevaluate in light of the rise of fascism—the neoclassicism of Stravinsky and Sibelius reminded Adorno fatally of the pillared monstrosities Albert Speer was erecting in Berlin. Adorno, Mann, Schoenberg, and many others wrestled with the legacy of Wagner and the uses to which he was being put in Nazi Germany.⁴¹

If California's reaction to the German intellectuals ran a broad gamut, from total neglect to rapturous welcome, the three émigrés who would

collide over *Doctor Faustus* found themselves on different points along that spectrum. Mann, the Nobel Prize winner and literary institution, had found the transition fairly easy and spent the war years in a highly publicized effort lobbying for the Allied cause and providing a voice of reason to the denizens of the Nazi Reich. Mann had never lacked for a sense of his own status, but in the 1940s he was undeniably and objectively important: an integral counterweight to the corruption and debasement of German culture under Hitler, a reminder that there was something in the country of Goethe and Luther that was worth saving.

Adorno found himself completely ignored in England, pushed into sociological work ill-suited to his interest on the East Coast of the States, and dependent on his friend Max Horkheimer's patronage and money once he came to Los Angeles. Adorno never forgave either the United Kingdom or the United States that they harbored him but would not pay any attention to him. His "Glosse über Sibelius" was a poison pen letter to the United Kingdom, then undergoing a somewhat baffling love affair with the composer, and *Minima Moralia*, Adorno's "Reflections from Damaged Life," heaps scorn on the commodified society he encountered in California.

Arnold Schoenberg fell somewhere in the middle. Neither as neglected as Adorno nor garnering the sort of recognition he had been used to, his position was a teetering, precarious one. Twelve-tone music put him on the cultural map in America, but it also consigned his influence to certain cultured enclaves. And Los Angeles was less than hospitable to it. Given their continued fame and influence today, the idea that these three men seriously feared that they might one day be forgotten seems strange. But one doesn't do the *Faustus* affair justice if one underestimates how seriously especially Schoenberg took the possibility of being forgotten.

The very landscape seemed to invite amnesia. Adorno would later write that "American consciousness" represented "the nightmare of a humanity without history."⁴² California meant safety and comfort, but it was also a place inhospitable to the kind of intellectual immortality on which Schoenberg, Mann, and Adorno had once safely counted. On Horkheimer's terrace at 13524 D'Este Drive, Adorno and Horkheimer penned the famous excursus on Odysseus for the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In their interpretation Odysseus emerges as the bourgeois subject par excellence, someone who has learned to make use of his reason to demystify, manipulate, and ultimately control a world of gods and monsters.

In their chapter they dwell on Odysseus's encounter with the Lotus-eaters. The trade offered by the Lotus-eaters, they wrote, is memory in exchange for bliss. It is likely they thought of the beaches and farmers'

markets along the Pacific when they did so. Odysseus, of course, extricates his men from the bliss and amnesia the Lotus-eaters offer. There is his home in Ithaca to think of, after all.

“Odysseus is therefore right not to endure life among the Lotus-eaters,” Adorno and Horkheimer write. In a sly Californian self-portrait they describe a situation in which two projects, that of cunning Odysseus and that of the blissed-out Lotus-eaters, though equally legitimate, come into conflict. The Lotus-eaters transgress against Odysseus by suggesting that utopia is simply a matter of dropping out, of ingesting some narcotics, but Odysseus knows that utopia has to be realized “through historical work.” But he wrongs them in turn, because the only way he knows out of their bliss is by violence and domination.⁴³

THE CASTAWAY: ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Although his stature in his new homeland was far greater than the Marxist scolds of D’Este Drive, Arnold Schoenberg was possessed of similar anxieties. He feared that he was being forgotten, that his mother tongue was atrophying. “Provided my German is still good enough,” he half-seriously hedged in one of his letters to Mann. Mann entertained no such worries but instead proclaimed to the *New York Times*, “Where I am, there is Germany. I carry my German culture in me.” Mann’s self-confidence in such matters was legendary and predated his exile. Schoenberg, by contrast, felt that exile merely exacerbated what had already been a history of misunderstanding and neglecting his achievements. As Dorothy Lamb Crawford writes, “memories of past repudiations and his sense of his own importance made him hypersensitive to any slight, even if imagined.”⁴⁴

And like Adorno, Schoenberg worried about not being heard, not being noticed—in fact, his first overture to Thomas Mann constituted an attempt to fix this. Schoenberg’s first California letter to Mann in December 1938 concerned an article, “A Four-Point Program for Jewry,” that the composer had tried and failed to get published: “In the face of such a complete failure I had begun to doubt whether what I had written was useful. That is really the worst thing that could possibly happen, feeling insecure about one’s work. Why: it isn’t even possible for me to get an article accepted?”⁴⁵

As his “Four-Point Program” made clear, Schoenberg’s anxiety about his reception was compounded by the fact that he had urgent, prescient things to say, and he wanted to say them to as wide an audience as possible. Propelled by the same distaste for bending back the arrow of musical progress as possessed Adorno, he didn’t bother meeting the audience halfway when it came

to compositional practice. But his topics—the *Kol Nidre*, op. 39, or *A Survivor from Warsaw*, op. 46, for instance—were intended for, and even necessitated, the biggest possible audience. Ehrhard Bahr points to a “complete reversal of his former elitist attitude toward his audience.”⁴⁶ The catastrophe of the Jewish people playing out half a world away tended to demand a certain maximalism—like fellow exile Kurt Weill, Schoenberg felt his music had to send out a clarion call to a people cast adrift by Nazi terror.⁴⁷

In this situation, not having one’s music heard was more than a matter of personal disappointment. Schoenberg’s musical aesthetics were always keenly attuned to “what was necessary to be expressed”⁴⁸ at a certain point in history, but what if one expressed what was necessary and no one was there to hear it? In an essay about the *Kol Nidre*, Schoenberg writes, “I assume that at the time when these words were spoken for the first time, everybody understood them perfectly.”⁴⁹ There is an immense desire to be understood in these pieces, a wish to tell and preserve stories.

In other words, Schoenberg’s anxieties at the time and the pressures of the historical moment were such that Mann’s casual erasure of Schoenberg’s story and ascriptions of his achievements to a fictional character were a match to potent tinder. But Mann, from the very beginning of their exile correspondence, seemed taken in by the enthusiasm with which Schoenberg argued his political positions but troubled by the positions themselves. Not only did Schoenberg’s appeal for help in publishing the “Four-Point Program” come to naught; Mann’s reply suggested, however gently, that the “overall intellectual stance . . . comes across as somewhat fascist.” Memories of this reaction likely stoked Schoenberg’s ire when he found his “intellectual property” (as he put it) espoused by a fictional character intended to stand in for German fascism.

Schoenberg was anxious that his connection with the culture of his old homeland was fraying and that his new homeland wasn’t quick to embrace him. He found himself questioning his productivity: “Composing is something I haven’t done for two years,” Schoenberg wrote to Jakob Klatzkin in July 1938. “I have had too much other work. And anyway: for whom should I write?”⁵⁰ He was concerned that he would only be recognized as “the composer of the *Verklärte Nacht*,”⁵¹ the only piece of his that seemed to find consistent success in America. He worried that his new composition students in Los Angeles were not up to the task of carrying on his legacy. And he found himself confronted with a fictional version of his own music and person—a grotesque caricature—designed as a kind of *damnatio memoriae*.

In May of 1938 the exhibition *Entartete Musik (Degenerate Music)* had its premiere in Düsseldorf. Here the music critic Hans Severus Ziegler had

assembled artifacts related to compositions by a veritable who's-who of modern German music.⁵² Unlike in the more famous show on "degenerate art," which had premiered in Munich the previous year, *degenerate* here seemed to largely mean "Jewish." There were few strictly aesthetic characteristics that Ziegler's show seemed to object to, late romantics like Franz Schreker were presented alongside jazz, neoclassicists, and atonal composers of Schoenberg's Second Viennese School. Since the show didn't feature much music, it sought to convince its audience with unflattering photographs and autographs by the composers in question.

Most of the show's unwitting protagonists, insofar as they were still alive, made their homes in the United States by May 1938. Before long, almost all of them (Ernst Krenek, Hanns Eisler, Ernst Toch, Igor Stravinsky, and of course Arnold Schoenberg) would become West Coast transplants. The awareness of the cultural politics of the Third Reich was naturally limited among the exiles, but they were aware of the bizarre counternarratives being spun about their music in their erstwhile homeland. The question for Schoenberg, unlike for Mann, was not just whether he'd be forgotten. It was whether a mendacious, fictional version of himself, of the kind Ziegler offered to audiences in the "Reich," would replace the actual person Arnold Schoenberg. It is not hard to see why Schoenberg might see *Doctor Faustus* as doing exactly that.

There was something about exile that made the German émigrés take the extremely long view. In the remarks Adorno drafted for Horkheimer's welcome to the Frankfurt Institute in 1952, he points to how distant the return felt that was, in terms of mere years, actually so near: "If someone had told us during those years when we lived as neighbors in Pacific Palisades by the Silent Ocean, that we would meet again in Germany and in an official capacity, we both would have smiled in disbelief."⁵³ People thought about their legacies in decades, centuries. When the Italian fascist composer Alfredo Casella (1883–1947) wrote an article proclaiming victory over German chromaticism, especially in its "extreme consequence" of atonality, Schoenberg's response dripped with sarcasm: "What a glorious victory! But this victory, does it not bring to mind other such victories? For example, the victory over Bach, which made his work fall thus perfectly into desuetude, so that his greatest works were unknown by the musical public already fifty years after his death."⁵⁴

At the same time, the Nazi denunciations of "degenerate" music were uncomfortably echoed in Mann's own take on modern music. They had grown in the same late romantic soil and perhaps sprang from a similar dilettantism. This was of course where the connection ended. But as Walter

Levin has pointed out, Schoenberg clearly sensed a commonality.⁵⁵ And on some less-than-conscious level there may well have been something to his suspicion: in his diaries Mann notes after one soiree in May 1943 that “according to Schoenberg, modern music—including twelve-tone music—has been permitted in Germany again since about 1940 and even to some extent encouraged despite ‘degenerate art.’”

It is not clear what Mann or Schoenberg were referring to. They were aware that few, isolated modernist composers—Paul von Klenau or Winfried Zillig—had found some acceptance in spite of Nazi hostility. But as the example of Schoenberg’s (non-Jewish and fairly Nazi-friendly)⁵⁶ student Anton Webern makes clear, the Nazis ordinarily did not soften their stance on music once deemed “degenerate.” What is clear is the lesson Mann takes away from Schoenberg’s supposed remark—a permission to associate modern music with the very people who wouldn’t let it be heard: “Must bear that in mind. State may have contradictory attitude towards Leverkühn.”

THE CLIMBER: THEODOR W. ADORNO

As much for reasons of convenience as for reasons of substance, Adorno would emerge as Schoenberg’s *bête noire* in the *Doctor Faustus* affair: Mann and Schoenberg made peace soon enough, but Schoenberg’s hatred for Adorno remained implacable. This in spite of the fact that Adorno was, and remained, an admirer of Schoenberg. Adorno’s early mentions of Schoenberg, above all in his letters to his composition-mentor Alban Berg, who had in turn been Schoenberg’s student, are thoroughly positive. Adorno composed music throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and in the late 1920s even wrote a series of songs he described to Berg as “the strictest twelve-tone music.”⁵⁷ Schoenberg would later mock Adorno’s music, and his immense slowness in producing it, suggesting that “he knows everything about twelve-tone music, but has no idea of the creative process involved.”⁵⁸

In exile Adorno undertook a project that was to center on a critique of Schoenberg’s music. *Philosophy of New Music* was not intended as an attack on Schoenberg but instead as an immanent critique of certain tendencies in Schoenberg’s compositional practice in light of the broader cultural critique Adorno would undertake in *In Search of Wagner* and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Nevertheless, Adorno sensed that it contained enough “formulations” that would lead the chapter’s subject to understand it as an attack. “I intend to subject the whole thing to self-censorship one more time if it does get published,” Adorno writes to the violinist Rudolf Kolisch

(Schoenberg's brother-in-law) in June of 1942—and he reacts in complete panic when Kolisch passes a copy on to Schoenberg's son-in-law.⁵⁹

When *Philosophy of New Music* did appear in print in 1949, many of these formulations were indeed removed, and the Schoenberg chapter was paired with what was truly an all-out assault on Igor Stravinsky—Schoenberg was clearly not, or no longer, a target of the book. Given all of Adorno's panicked information-management, it is somewhat surprising that Adorno took the seemingly risky step of giving his text to Thomas Mann. Mann received a draft on July 21, 1943, and finished reading it by July 27. He immediately recognized that it would be important to the *Faustus* project, and Adorno seems to have known that this was why Mann was interested.

Why hand a manuscript he sought to keep from Schoenberg to a world-famous author not known for keeping the private private? Adorno's motivation to part with the copy likely had the same source as his reticence to let it out of his orbit otherwise: Adorno was at this point in his life keenly aware of status. He arrived in Los Angeles as a nobody, and the precariousness of his new life seemed to heighten a certain sycophantic bend. His exchanges with his composition-teacher Berg drip with supplication ("Dear Master and Teacher"), and his early overtures to Mann border on the obsequious. Adorno had seen Mann once during a vacation on the island of Sylt but had been too timid to speak to him. Now he was clearly somewhat star struck and at once keen to ingratiate himself and to think of himself and Mann as on the same level. Although his financial situation was anything but rosy, he seems to have rejected any notion of being paid for his services.

He seems to have tried with Schoenberg as well, but Schoenberg would have none of it. "I could never really stand him," he confessed in 1950, adding a portrait of deranged fandom: "He engulfed me with his piercing eyes, advancing on me ever nearer until a wall prevented further escape."⁶⁰ Schoenberg thought of Adorno as an epigone, student of his student, desperate to impress. Adorno, for him, was all "oily pathos, bombast, the affected passion of his veneration."⁶¹ He hated Adorno's very mode of expression—a style that Mann frequently lauded, that made it into some of Kretschmar's lectures and Zeitblom's analyses in *Doctor Faustus*, that as *Adorno Stil* would devastate German academic writing for three decades.

Mann, by contrast, seemed charmed, but perhaps more importantly he sensed that Adorno would be useful. The collaboration between the established author and the young philosopher was from the beginning rather parasitic. Though it was Schoenberg who would later accuse Thomas Mann of plagiarism, there is no other word for what Mann was doing to Adorno—

albeit, one must note, with Adorno's complete compliance. Adorno sent Mann prose "descriptions" of Adrian Leverkühn's fictional works, and Mann incorporated several of them almost unchanged. Significantly, Adorno would later deny (on request by Katia Mann) that he felt plagiarized, emphasizing that he had given "friendly advice," that he had been a "witness to the writing of the book."

This seems to have mattered most to Adorno: he was greatly invested in seeing himself and Mann as communicating at eye-level; he seemed to swat away any suspicions, though he must have entertained them, that he was being treated like the help. Adorno lived long enough to find out that Mann had evidently not thought of it that way at all: when Mann's letters came out in print in the mid-1960s, Adorno learned that Mann had thought he had unduly inflated his role in the creation of the novel.⁶² In this Mann manages to be both spectacularly ungrateful and not entirely wrong: Adorno had shown immense devotion to Mann and was in general quite discreet about the aid he had given the writer, but behind his devotion lay a burning desire for recognition.

The work of Adorno's California period was not music criticism, aesthetics, or even traditional Marxism. Although works such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *In Search of Wagner*, and *Minima Moralia* touched on artwork from Homer via the Marquis de Sade to Igor Stravinsky, their collective aim was a critique of purposive rationality, which, Adorno claimed, was founded on a more basic irrationality.⁶³ This was what he and Horkheimer would identify as the "dialectic of enlightenment": Western rationality had learned to control nature but had never in the process questioned the nature of that control itself.

It was as part of this work, the critique of absolute rationality, that twelve-tone music became an object of Adorno's critique: it functioned as an analogue to the categories of enlightenment, to the operations of the "identity principle," to the fungibility of the market. This parallelism to some extent forced Adorno's hand: Schoenberg was always annoyed that Adorno mischaracterized his "method" as a "system."⁶⁴ And he likely had too little interest in Adorno's philosophy to see why Adorno persisted in using the word, that indeed he was not making a claim about Schoenberg's "creative process" (as Schoenberg suspected) but that he was expressing a worry about a form of expression that seemed to make a fetish of a certain kind of objectivity.⁶⁵ For one thing, in their exchange of letters both Adorno and Berg refer to twelve-tone composition as a "technique" or "style," in other words somewhat akin to the way Schoenberg would. But, more importantly, as Adorno makes clear in his later lectures on *Philosophical*

Terminology, our “everyday” understanding of *system* is quite different from the way philosophy uses it.⁶⁶

Adorno worries there about a “moment, which cuts off the freedom of reflection and turns the system dominating and violent.”⁶⁷ Adorno’s *Philosophy of New Music* doesn’t propose that twelve-tone composition is uncreative but that it is insufficiently reflective of its own presuppositions. This may still be an inaccurate critique, but it is clearly not the critique Schoenberg thought Adorno was making. Still, Schoenberg was correct insofar as Alban Berg had clearly fostered in Adorno an exaggerated sense of the strictness of Schoenberg’s technique. In a letter from August of 1928, Berg claims that there is nothing “stricter than Schoenberg’s Quintett [op. 26] in which there isn’t a single ‘free’ note (other than as a printer’s error).”⁶⁸ Adorno, a student of Neo-Kantians, a serious-minded citizen of prosaic Frankfurt, probably took the universality implicit in twelve-tone technique more seriously than the Viennese Schoenberg. In this respect, too, Schoenberg erred in thinking that Adorno simply didn’t like his music. Berg made this comment to caution Adorno, who in fact thought that he’d outdone Schoenberg in sheer stringency in his George-songs: the “systematizing” impulse that he faults Schoenberg for Adorno recognized well in himself.

THE “EMPEROR”: THOMAS MANN

But the most serious misunderstanding was likely Mann’s. In his *The Story of a Novel (Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus)*, published two years after the novel itself, he defended himself by pointing out that it was only natural for a writer to turn to “benevolent connoisseurs” (*wohlwollenden Kennern*) in planning and writing a novel as complex as *Faustus*.⁶⁹ Comments about Adorno’s “expertise” and “learning” are sprinkled throughout Mann’s correspondence with Adorno. But this entails a massive misunderstanding of what Adorno was offering Mann.

Granted, an essay like “Beethoven’s Late Style,” which Mann used to write Wendell Kretzschmar’s lecture on Beethoven’s op. 111 in *Doctor Faustus*, represented a kind of expertise easily incorporated into Mann’s undertaking. But *Philosophy of New Music* was not intended as highly competent music criticism but a young scholar’s bracing, new, and highly idiosyncratic intervention into the history and theory of postromantic music. Adorno sensed as much, writing to Horkheimer after completing his *Philosophy of New Music* that “this time everyone, except you, will consider me mad.”⁷⁰ The Marxist premises that so contravened Mann’s own aesthetic judgments were only the beginning of the odd fit.⁷¹ Adorno was

offering a theory of fascism directly opposed to the one that Mann seemed to suggest in *Faustus*. Mann's Leverkühn surrenders to irrationality, infecting himself deliberately with syphilis. Adorno's Schoenberg has a troubling tendency to occlude the irrationalist origins of his music with the objectivity of his technique.

But it was not just the material he imported that was bound to cause confusion. So was the way in which he imported it. He enthused to Adorno about the way he "montaged" the philosopher's idea into the novel, but the actual manuscript suggests that Mann had perhaps a less-stringent understanding of what montage entailed than the composers. In his very first letter to Adorno he writes: "I am not worried about *montage* in this connection, and never have been. What belongs in the book must go into it, and will be properly absorbed in the process. . . . As in the earlier case of little Hanno's typhoid fever, my 'initiated' ignorance required precise *details* [*Exaktheiten*] to enhance the literary illusion and structure of the composition."⁷²

The case of "little Hanno" is instructive. Mann is referring here to the jarring episode in the eleventh part of his 1901 novel *Buddenbrooks*. There, following a lengthy description of a day in the life of Hanno Buddenbrook, last scion of the declining titular family, Mann's narrator opens his next chapter with a text that could be drawn from a medical textbook: "Typhoid runs the following course."⁷³ The description remains clinical throughout; the narrator's humanizing touches are absent; the name Hanno is never even uttered. The effect is both jarring and unforgettable.

The example suggests that Mann imported text into his novels, but he deployed and manipulated it to his own overall aims. Real people inspired his characters, but those characters were never portraits. And while the translation as "details" may obscure Mann's meaning a bit, what Mann solicited from Adorno were "exactitudes," not facts; they were intended to create the effect of realism, the effect of learnedness, not to be either of those things. Mann wanted to sprinkle his prose with a dash of "exactitudes"—its very plural form suggests how ironic he is being.

In *Doctor Faustus* Zeitblom himself thinks Leverkühn deploys "quotation as disguise, the parody as pretext." And he suggests that without quoting, "how could the word have been written down that pressed to be written down?"⁷⁴ Only in quoting and in appropriating, only by playacting, can Leverkühn say what at this moment has to be said. We can safely presume Leverkühn's creator, anxious to grapple with what had happened to his homeland, sensing deep, troubling connections to the very culture he now represented, felt much the same way. The sheer enormity of what Mann sought to express required him to overreach, to overabsorb, to appropriate.

Schoenberg was predisposed to see matters differently. His compositional technique implied that quotation always meant an adaptation of pre-existing material rather than its wholesale importation. In a letter he sent to the *New York Times* music critic Olin Downes in 1938, Schoenberg addresses the question of how he “quoted” the theme “B-A-C-H” in his *Variations for Orchestra*, op. 31. What he describes there suggests a very different understanding of what quoting entailed than what we see in Mann: “If I should explain why I used these quotations,” he writes, “I saw suddenly the possibility and did it.” Comparing his way of proceeding to Beethoven’s *Diabelli Variations* and Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, he allows that “of course my quotation is not as humorous as both of these before mentioned. But again I have an excuse: I believe I have woven it in rather thoroughly.”⁷⁵ Quotation was not something one could hide behind.

So did Schoenberg simply misunderstand Mann’s technique? It isn’t as simple as that, for in the very same letter to Adorno, Mann asks Adorno to “intervene and correct such details . . . if they should appear mistaken, misleading, or put in such a way as to provoke the scorn of experts.”⁷⁶ Here Mann the novelist came into conflict with Mann the public intellectual. The Mann of *Buddenbrooks* had not intended for his description of typhoid to cement his medical credentials; but as his stature grew, he had increasing trouble distinguishing between imbuing his narrators with an aura of expertise and actually being himself an expert in something. Given his own self-presentation, then, the misunderstanding that Zeitblom’s account in *Doctor Faustus* represented a verdict (specifically Adorno’s verdict) of Schoenberg almost forced itself on the reader.

At the same time, Mann’s invocation of the encyclopedia article on typhoid fever suggests a fatal lack of respect for the texts and ideas with which he was grappling in his novel: incorporating an encyclopedia text simply isn’t the same thing as incorporating the highly peculiar ideas of a young, energetic scholar eager to make a name for himself, ideas moreover about a particularly recondite school of elite music. Mann liked to call himself a “magician,” and he admired Goethe greatly; in dealing with Adorno on twelve-tone technique, he reminds one instead of Goethe’s sorcerer’s apprentice—overconfidently invoking what will, in the wrong hands, bear uncanny fruit.

When Schoenberg expressed pique about Mann’s thoughtless appropriation of his own biography, he joined a rather distinguished crowd: Mann serially included figures modeled after famous contemporaries, or even his family members, into his works, and he seemed genuinely

surprised each time when they reacted badly.⁷⁷ In some cases he recognized as much. When he populated “The Blood of the Walsungs” with anti-Semitic versions of his in-laws and based the story’s incestuous twins on his wife and her twin brother, the family pressured him to withdraw the publication.⁷⁸ And in his *Story of a Novel* he expresses regret over using his own grandson Fridolin in creating the character of Nepomuk (“Nepo”) Schneidewein, who dies toward the climax of *Doctor Faustus*.

But in other cases—and especially when it came to other artists and thinkers—he seemed to know far less compunction. Even if we grant that Leverkühn was not Schoenberg, one couldn’t fault Schoenberg for suspecting that he was: after all, in *Faustus* alone Sixtus Kridwiß is modeled after Mann’s Munich friend Emil Preetorius, and Chaim Breisacher is a stand-in for the cultural pessimist Oswald Spengler.⁷⁹ Gerhart Hauptmann wasn’t exactly thrilled when Mann turned Mynheer Peepkorn in *The Magic Mountain* into a virtual parody of the writer.⁸⁰

Mann was universally cavalier about these borrowings. Again and again he pleaded unconscious borrowing where those who had watched his writing process saw very intentional parodies.⁸¹ “That is what it is,” Mann wrote about the Peepkorn-Hauptmann connection in a 1925 letter to Herbert Eulenberg: “a product of the imagination which involuntarily and half unconsciously [is] colored by a powerful real experience.”⁸² By the time he turned Schoenberg into grist for his fiction, then, Mann had decades of practice and a well-honed sense of artistic entitlement to his contemporaries’ likenesses and stories. He had lifted bits of text and incorporated them verbatim into his works. He had also witnessed decades of more or less outraged reactions to his aesthetic vampirism.

But Schoenberg’s specific outrage points to a broader puzzlement: it appears that the composer picked consistently the wrong points on which to fault *Faustus*. For one thing, as Bojan Bujic has put it, it is curious that Schoenberg focused so much “on the acknowledgment of his authorship.”⁸³ For another, Schoenberg seemed inclined to grant *Faustus* a kind of magical power over historical memory—an ability to rewrite history, to obliterate memory, to reverse chronology—that no novel could possibly hope for or want. In other words, Schoenberg ascribed to *Faustus* things Nazi Germany (and indeed post-Nazi Germany) did or would do. The more glaring problems—Mann’s arrogant late-romantic judgments of musical modernism, his blinkered association of modernism with fascism—were never the real target of Schoenberg’s ire. Why foreground the question of whether fictional composer Adrian Leverkühn or very real Arnold Schoenberg was the

inventor of twelve-tone composing? Was not Mann's philistine judgment of twelve-tone composition as a symptom of Nazi-like national decline far more troubling?

Ironically, though, the reason why Schoenberg's much more ill-founded charge of "plagiarism" stuck probably had to do with developments in the country Schoenberg and Mann had left behind. Accusations of plagiarism had a curious role in the West German intelligentsia's relationship to the returning émigrés and Holocaust survivors. Critics and scholars, most of whom had either participated in Nazi crimes or claimed for themselves the hazy status of "inner emigrants," were curiously predisposed to believe claims of plagiarism when they arose. When Yvan Goll's widow accused the poet Paul Celan of having plagiarized her late husband's poems, the charge, absurd on its face, resounded through the German feuilleton for nearly a decade.⁸⁴ Hometown audiences seemed never happier than when these accusations pitted two émigrés—like Goll and Celan, like Mann and Schoenberg—against each other.

But if its resonance was a result of events in Germany, the genesis of the *Faustus* controversy is inseparably bound up with California and with the curious entwining of proximity and exile that characterized Pacific Palisades. Schoenberg's focus on the authorship question was inevitable, given his anxieties about the possible disappearance of his work, about the funhouse-mirror version of him that stalked through the Nazis' "degenerate music" exhibition. It was galling to have his ideas spread far and wide by someone else after having been unable to spread them when it mattered most. And perhaps he was incensed by the seigneurial manner in which Mann—wealthy, famous, non-Jewish, perhaps less at risk of Nazi barbarism—appropriated and consistently failed to credit the labor of impoverished Jewish artists living around him.

But behind it loomed what Ehrhard Bahr has called the "crisis of modernism." The émigrés came to California anxious to continue the work that had made them famous but sensing that it could not go on as it had in Weimar Germany—that certain aesthetic practices had lost their critical power or had even become deeply suspect after the rise of fascism. The "great petulance" that seemed to lay hold of the émigrés may have ultimately spoken to an artistic and intellectual elite suspicious even of what little security remained for them. "It is part of morality not to be at home in one's home," Adorno wrote in *Minima Moralia*.⁸⁵ By that metric, amid the shifting categories and uncertain political terrain, Mann, Schoenberg, and Adorno, precisely when they misunderstood and mistreated each other, were at their most moral.