

*Der Fall Faustus: Continuity and Displacement
in Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno and
Thomas Mann's Californian Exile*

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For Thomas McFarland

Introduction: Fatal Substitution

Writing history means giving the calendar
numerals their physiognomies.
—Walter Benjamin

“It is a *very* strange relationship.”¹ Writing to his mother in January 1947, when the collaboration with Thomas Mann on *Doktor Faustus* was reaching its end, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno would still find their connection impossible to describe. From today’s greater distance we in turn cannot presume to say definitively what it is that went on there. Certainly, a novel was written; certainly, a difficult friendship emerged and then faded into politeness as the postwar years rolled on. But what these consequences of the collaboration mean and how they might be related are questions that remain perennially open, if only because historical catastrophe inscribed an irreducible

1. Theodor W. Adorno, “To Maria Wiesengrund,” January 12, 1947, in *Briefe an die Eltern, 1939–1951*, ed. Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 389. Hereafter cited as *BE*. All translations are mine.

specificity into the incongruous exile milieu that made the collaboration possible. That tincture of historical specificity relates the collaboration to us in our own historical specificity. And so it comes down to us suspended not in the ideal unity of the artwork, of *Doktor Faustus* alone, but distributed throughout different sorts of text: fictional narrative, to be sure, but contemporary epistolary testimony, aesthetic-philosophical analysis, retrospective memoir, as well; each text with its peculiar archival presence and intentional location in history, its particular afterlife and receptive relation to subsequent readers and circumstances.

Among these attendant writings is the thin volume Mann published in Amsterdam in 1949, some two years after *Doktor Faustus* had appeared. *The Emergence of Doctor Faustus* (*Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*) is a documentary account, drawn largely from his diaries, of the three years Mann spent composing the novel in California. In his chronological imbrication of public events and personal experiences, Mann does not stray far from a journalistic tone. Despite the historical verifiability of his descriptions, however, he subtitles this fragment of autobiography a “novel of a novel” (*Roman eines Romans*), conceding with a small irony that the composition of a recent novel, considered precisely as a fragment of autobiography, is itself a far from self-evident narrative object.² The subtitle begs the question what independent significance might accrue to such an emergence beyond the novel that emerged. The suspicion lies near that the irony of Mann’s genre repetition is not meant to mitigate the referential accuracy of *The Emergence of Doctor Faustus*—the text remains autobiography and not fiction—but simply to register an awkward insufficiency its own supplemental existence implicitly acknowledges.

And as if to confirm immediately these ambiguous implications for the fate of this narrative, *The Emergence of Doctor Faustus* begins with a curious death, Mann’s own and not his own, a death fastened more firmly to a given date than to the eventual destiny of his ailing body:

Diary entries for 1945 show me that on December 22 of that year the Los Angeles correspondent of *Time* called on me . . . to challenge me concerning

2. Thomas Mann, *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus: Roman eines Romans* (Amsterdam: Bermann-Fischer, 1949), 3; Mann, *The Story of a Novel: The Genesis of “Doctor Faustus,”* trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Knopf, 1961). Hereafter cited as *EDF* and *GDF*, respectively. The translation has been silently amended. The transcendent implications of a biblical genesis are in fact out of place in the discussion of *Doktor Faustus*: the novel emerged from the fissures of a shattered literary tradition, in response to an emergency that has not yet ended. For these reasons, and conceding a move away from a strictly literal translation, I refer to Mann’s text throughout as *The Emergence of Doctor Faustus*.

a prophecy I had made fifteen years before, and that was failing to be fulfilled. At the end of *Sketch of My Life*, written in 1930 and available also in English, I had with half-sportive belief in certain symmetries and numerical correspondences in my life ventured the guess that I would pass from this world in 1945, at the age of seventy, as had my mother. The foretold year, the man said, was virtually over, and I had not kept my word. What did I want to say to the public to excuse myself for still being alive? (*EDF*, 9; *GDF*, 3–4)

To this indiscreet challenge Mann responds by complicating the notion of prediction: “The fulfillment of prophecies, I said, was a curious business. Often they did not come true literally, but suggestively [*auf eine andeutende Weise*], perhaps a bit wide of the mark, open to question and yet unmistakable. Substitutions occur” (*EDF*, 9; *GDF*, 4). By not simply repudiating the prediction and the superstitious correspondences and precedents that originally motivated it but evoking in its defense the mythic ambiguity of prophesy, Mann complicates the fatal limit that falls across the year then coming to its close. Nineteen forty-five does not mark the absolutely individuating terminus of his physical death (Mann would live a decade beyond this date). Rather, the number announces a different edge to life between a mythic substitution. To redeem the prophesy, Mann substitutes for his physical life something else, something less tangible, conceding that he is still present to answer the questions *Time* puts to him yet insisting that in a sense he also is not or is no longer, and that the year 1945 has indeed witnessed his unmistakable, if questionable, extinction.

What approximates Mann’s death in 1945? In what sense did he pass away with the year then closing, and in what way does he survive that reckoning? What substitutes for what across a boundary of mortality? Mann himself goes on to identify the substitution with his own increasing medical travails, in particular the pulmonary surgery he had recently survived. Yet his recourse to the valetudinary states of his own body cannot explain that substitution, but is metaphor and equivocation. To suggest that something like a fatal substitution is possible is to assert a continuity that exceeds the living body and transcends the rupture of its death. To the extent that that vital exterior is perceived as superhuman activity, such a fatal substitution will appear as mythic *sacrifice*. But where the perspective on death remains immanent to human life, replacing one life with another is but the exploitative asymptote of rational *exchange*. Mann’s wry and “half-sportive” conceit invokes this alternative between exchange and sacrifice.

The reader is all the more ready to accept the mythic weight of fatal substitution, even in the ironically deflationary context of an interview with *Time*,

because *Doktor Faustus* itself is so ostentatiously concerned with this alternative, the space between a potentially redemptive sacrifice and a potentially culpable exchange. The tale's narrative machinery moves through its sequence of terminating deaths—of Rudy Schwertfeger, of tiny Nepo Schneidewein, eventually of its protagonist Adrian Leverkühn himself—each time raising in its pathos the contrast between demonic bargain and exculpatory sacrifice. But pathos just *is* the passive dimension, the immanence, of life, and whatever really lies beyond it necessarily lies outside the jurisdiction of its warrant. Perforce Mann's novel evades any explicit choice between sacrifice and exchange and suspends its final question mark above an ultimate velleity. "When will it reach the bottom of the abyss? When, out of uttermost hopelessness—a miracle beyond the power of belief—will the light of hope dawn? A lonely man folds his hands and speaks: God be merciful to thy poor soul, my friend, my Fatherland!"³

Something beyond mere human lives must transcend and link the elements of fatal substitution, give it mythic substance, if it is to have sacrificial efficacy. But human language has long since surrendered its superhuman mandate in this regard. From a theological perspective, literature is the drawn-out reaction to this loss of divinely authoritative language. The absence of transcendence, among the earliest reproaches leveled at Mann's novel,⁴ is not an aesthetic but a historical deficiency. No literature, bound as it is to the continuity of pathos, can license fatal substitutions, can perform them or sustain them. The unprecedented demand for redemption in light of the destruction manifested in 1945 crushes and does not mythically empower human language. In acknowledging the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of a redemptive agency beyond the paroxysm of death whose cultural negotiation 1945 inaugurates, *Doktor Faustus* is reflecting its paradoxical situation accurately. The weakness of the novel does not lie in its execution, in its failure to render a judgment that is, in truth, beyond its competence. Rather, its insufficiency is inscribed in its conception, an environmentally conditioned birth defect. This original flaw is what calls forth the compensatory journalistic documentation of *The Emergence of Doctor Faustus*, whose remorseful

3. Thomas Mann, *Doktor Faustus: Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn erzählt von einem Freunde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), 651; *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Vintage, 1971), 510. Hereafter cited as *DF* and *DF*, respectively. The translation is in places silently amended.

4. Most notably by Hans Egon Holthusen, *Die Welt ohne Transcendenz: Eine Studie zu Thomas Manns "Dr. Faustus" und seinen Nebenschriften* (Hamburg: Ellermann, 1949).

confession recounts, “This one time I knew what I was setting out to do and what task I was imposing upon myself: to write nothing less than the novel of my era, disguised as the story of an artist’s precarious and sinful life” (*EDF*, 38; *GDF*, 38). The assumption that the era still possessed enough coherence to be congruent with a literary form is the *proton pseudos* behind the *Faustus* project. Despite Mann’s forthrightness here the assumption lies not in his will but in the demand to which he feels himself responsible. That demand, however, emerges from the historical moment around him, from the abjection of a shattered world and the consequent caesura fracturing its representation.

From one perspective, that caesura falls between *Doktor Faustus* and the memoir of the *Emergence*. The fatal substitution with which Mann begins points in this direction. For December 1945, when the interview with *Time* takes place, is also the moment when the novel’s authorship itself was displaced from Mann to Adorno. The *Emergence* is Mann’s attempt to describe that displacement and, in so doing, to reassert authorial control. But the original shift in authorship is simultaneously a shift from content to occasion, a shift behind the text that a text alone cannot revoke. Death in particular changes its aspect when it falls from aesthetic content into a historical occasion. Mann’s initial death that seems to invoke a fatal substitution, then, is also the herald of the desultory actual deaths running throughout the *Emergence*: Franz Werfel, Gerhard Hauptmann, Mann’s sister-in-law Nelly Kröger, Bruno Frank, Erwin Rommel, Roosevelt. In a stately and resolute rhythm, each important juncture in the novel’s composition is attended by such a loss. But none of these deaths is given mythic substance, none points toward the future as anything more than its own further absence, and each death thus retains the brutal contingency of a historical event. Every war imposes its own unprecedented sort of disillusion. World War II is ending; an exhausted Europe on the smoldering continent and in flight around the globe is taking stock, assessing the destruction, the changes, and the chances for return. The bleak melancholy of Mann’s account reflects this different mortality, not the opaque source but the serrated edge of meaning, deposited into the historical devastation surrounding him.

Hence not the mythic content of Mann’s response but the moment of *Time*’s skeptical question—December 1945—is the fulcrum that anchors this fatal substitution. For in the historical silhouette of *Doktor Faustus* that moment is neither the beginning of the project (whose conception reaches back to 1901 and whose composition starts in May 1943) nor its completion (at the end of January 1947). Rather, December 30, 1945, is the date of the letter in which Mann invites Adorno to collaborate on Leverkühn’s musical

works. "Would you care to reflect with me upon how the work—I mean Leverkühn's work—might perhaps be set into the work," Mann asks; "how you yourself might do it, were you in a pact with the Devil?"⁵ The concept of a "work" proliferates under Mann's pen, and the displacement of its referent from Mann's novel to Leverkühn's music is already a sly misdirection. For these descriptions of the protagonist's compositions are direct semantic condensations of the entire project and can in no way be separated, even provisionally, from the meaning of *Doktor Faustus* as a whole.

What threatens to have passed away in 1945, Mann's opening suggests, is not Mann's life directly but a historical time to which Mann could appropriately respond in novelistic expression. From without, in the mass circulation culture of the new postwar environment that *Time* exemplifies, that antebellum expressive context appears reduced to a paradoxical succedaneum in the shadow of mortality. Mann's celebrity in this new world substitutes for the lost authority of his art. But it is as the loss of authority that the collaboration with Adorno appears in the *Emergence*. Behind Mann's celebrity, which he remained unwilling to dilute, the acknowledgment of the collaboration with Adorno does not determine a ratio of aesthetic responsibility between them but, like two Catholic popes or two kings of Britain, mutually undermines all authorial sovereignty over the novel. This collapse of authority is, in the end, the lasting significance of the strange relationship that produced this fractured work.

December 1945 and the collaboration on Leverkühn's music was the culmination of a two-year process that had already passed through two prior stages. In 1943, relatively early in the novel's composition, Mann had discussed Beethoven's music with Adorno and incorporated aspects of his understanding of that music into chapter 8. Then, early in 1945, Mann turned to Adorno's interpretation of Schoenberg's music, the essay that would later become the first part of *Philosophy of New Music*, when working out the aesthetic discussion between Leverkühn and the Devil in chapter 25. Thus Adorno's work had already substantially informed the musicological and aesthetic philosophy of *Doktor Faustus* well before the novelist approached Adorno to contribute to chapter 34 and Leverkühn's late masterpieces. But up until December 1945, Adorno had been a source, a particularly important one, perhaps, but a source in principle no different from any other Mann employed to construct his novel. Only with the third phase of the collaboration does the

5. Thomas Mann, "To Theodor W. Adorno," December 30, 1945, in Thomas Mann and Theodor W. Adorno, *Briefwechsel, 1943–1955*, ed. Christoph Gödde and Thomas Sprecher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 21. Hereafter cited as *BAM*. All translations are mine.

nature of Adorno's contribution change qualitatively. From being a technical adviser on matters musical, a cultural diagnostician on matters philosophical, Adorno is promoted in this final stage to the status of coauthor. But just in that promotion, the aesthetic enchantment of the narrative voice is broken, and the novel's significance slips back into the historical conditions that motivate Mann's abandonment. "But how outdated, superseded, rebutted the 'Faustus' looks today," Mann would eventually write to Adorno years later, "when one takes it merely as allegory for 'Germany'" (*BAM*, 141 [March 8, 1954]). The allegorical ambition to represent the present in a sovereign aesthetic gesture is thereby fastened to that present, Mann concedes. As political allegory the diagnosis itself has become symptomatic. Read as an allegory for "Germany" . . . but how else can a novel whose anaphoric ending pleads for friend and fatherland be read? Mann does not tell us, and here I consider the novel only as it conditions Adorno's theoretical effort. But that is what remains at stake in any consideration of this collaboration. The constellation of texts around *Doktor Faustus* invokes a different mortal regime, not the handing down of mythic continuities beyond individual deaths but the maintenance in shifts of a precarious attentiveness, a continuous vigil against sleep.

Dropping Names

Where *The Emergence of Doctor Faustus* gives Mann's contemporary view of the collaboration, Adorno maintained a public discretion on the matter. His perspective is conveyed most immediately in the letters he wrote at the time from California to his parents in New York. Since Adorno's correspondence with Mann directly is almost entirely subsequent to the publication of *Doktor Faustus*, this familial correspondence is all that preserves the traces of Adorno's experience as it unfolds. That experience, as well, involves shifts and surrenders of authority as it negotiates the asymmetries structuring its volatile exiled environment.

Initially, Adorno simply drops the name of the Nobel Prize-winning novelist, a figure with whom someone of his parents' generation would surely be familiar: "This evening at Max's [Horkheimer] with a couple of big-shots, among them Thomas Mann and fetching spouse," he mentions casually on March 29, 1943 (*BE*, 190). And a few months later, when Horkheimer's invitation was reciprocated, he tells his parents, "Tuesday we [Adorno and his wife, Gretel] visited Thomas Mann, unfortunately with music, otherwise quite nice" (*BE*, 209 [July 26, 1943]). But as Mann's interest in Adorno's musicological competence becomes evident, the younger man's references grow less flippant:

A bit of respect: tomorrow evening we'll be having dinner just the two of us with Thomas Mann. He has read my "Philosophy of New Music" and is so enthusiastic about it that he wants to talk it over in detail with me and read me something from his new novel, a musician novel (the main figure is somehow based on Schoenberg) which he would like to hear my opinion of. Well, maybe he'll be made *Reichspräsident*. . . . Anyway, even if he is no longer at the height of his intellectual powers, he is very pleasant, friendly, and we're glad to be going. (*BE*, 218 [September 26, 1943])

At some point between July and September, Adorno had lent Mann the typescript of his extensive essay "Schoenberg and Progress," the first half of what, together with "Stravinsky and Restoration," a philippic written a year and more after the collaboration,⁶ would be published in 1948 as *Philosophy of New Music*. But although Mann would indeed integrate the Schoenberg discussion into chapter 25 of *Doktor Faustus*, in which the Devil visits Leverkühn, when Mann came to compose that scene a year later at the start of 1945, the conversation Adorno is here anticipating in fact concerned Beethoven more nearly than Schoenberg, and chapter 8 of the eventual novel, which chronicles Leverkühn's musical education at the feet of the stuttering Wendell Kretzschmar. These long disquisitions introduced early in the story provide the musical motifs Mann would develop in Leverkühn's own subsequent compositions. On that late September evening Mann read a preliminary version of the chapter to Adorno, who commented on it and in return provided Mann with a copy of his 1934 essay "Beethoven's Late Style."⁷

Within a few days they were meeting again to discuss Kretzschmar's lectures further, and during this second discussion, as Mann recounts in the *Emergence*, "Adorno sat down at the piano and, while I stood by and watched, played for me the entire Sonata Opus 111 in a highly instructive fashion." Adorno's interpretation had an immediate effect on Mann: "I had never been more attentive. I rose early the following morning and for the next three days immersed myself in a thoroughgoing revision and extension of the lecture on the sonata, which became a significant enrichment and embellishment of the

6. "I'm sure I've already told you that I'm writing a whole new section of the 'Philosophy of New Music' on Stravinskij. Now together with a few other expansions that will be one more book" (*BE*, 446 [February 24, 1948]).

7. Theodor W. Adorno, "Spätstil Beethovens," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, with Gretel Adorno, Susan Buck-Morss, and Klaus Schultz, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971–86), 17:13–17; Adorno, "Text 3: Beethoven's Late Style," in *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 123–26. Hereafter cited as *GS* and *BPM*, respectively.

chapter and indeed of the whole book. Into the poetic little illustrative phrases I wrote for the arietta theme I inscribed Adorno's patronymic, *Wiesengrund* [*Meadowland*], as a clandestine demonstration of gratitude [*versteckte Dankbarkeitsdemonstration*]" (*EDF*, 46; *GDF*, 48). Indeed, we do find in chapter 8 direct citations from Adorno's essay on Beethoven's late compositions, as well as the esoteric gesture acknowledging Adorno's contribution. "Only three notes, a quaver, a semiquaver, and a dotted crotchet," Mann has Kretzschmar rhapsodize over Beethoven's simple theme in the sonata's latter movement, "to be scanned as, say: 'heav-en's blue, lov-er's pain, fare-thee well, on a-time, mead-ow-land'—and that is all" (*DF*, 72; *DF*, 54). The last of these dactyls, in the original "Wie-sengrund," was the patronymic of Mann's young instructor.

Only in December 1943 would Mann finish these revisions and introduce the hidden signature acknowledging their inspiration and perhaps their source. But already in October, Adorno's remarks to his parents indicate how much of an impression his advisory role in Mann's current project had made on him. "My dears," he writes them on October 20,

a thousand thank yous for your dear letter on the 16th with the lines about Thomas Mann. Kretzschmar, about whom you ask, is neither a lector nor a publisher nor any kind of real human being but a person from Thomas Mann's new novel, a musician-novel from which he's read me a great deal and whom I advise as a musical expert [*musikalischer Sachverständiger*] (he rewrote an entire section after a discussion with me, this is just between you and me, don't even tell the good Julie, since under no circumstances do I want this to get around among the Jews [*der Judenschaft*].) (*BE*, 222)⁸

At least in the context of familial correspondence, Adorno experiences the collaboration with Mann in nationalist terms, an alliance across the specifically German-Jewish cultural divide that demands a certain discretion to negotiate, though whether out of consideration for his own reputation or Mann's or for the exiled Jewish community in New York is not immediately obvious.

Yet it is clear from Adorno's subsequent correspondence that however unavoidable the immediate historical relevance of that nationalist divide might be, a condition of the thrill of the work was a sense that his and Mann's common plight of exile outweighed the historical context. Adorno continues to insist on his parents' discretion, but not again in these explicitly ethnic terms. Indeed, toward the patriarchal novelist Adorno adopts a distinctly filial posture,

8. "The good Julie" was Julie Rautenberg (1882–1960), the business partner of Adorno's father; she had emigrated with the family.

from which he can even venture a certain reproach to his actual parents. In his first letter of the new year Adorno writes:

Moreover, Thomas Mann studies every essay I give him down to the smallest word and takes excerpts from most of it, which is something I admire greatly (he is about your age, almost 70). So it seems it wasn't only a misfortune that I did not turn out like Franz Villinger. . . . But I don't want to carp but would rather say openly that I'm a little saddened by your indifference to my work, while relatively distant people, and even those with the reputation of being particularly "cool," like Thomas Mann, sometimes show more of an understanding of what is specific to me than do you, those closest to me. (*BE*, 237–38 [January 17, 1944])⁹

This letter preserves Adorno's response to the revised version of chapter 8, including the citations from his own essay "Beethoven's Late Style" and the inscribed patronymic. In the *Emergence* Mann recalls Adorno's enthusiasm when the novelist read the revision aloud after a New Year's dinner gathering: "The reading made an extraordinary impression—intensified, it seemed, by the contrast between the strongly German basis and coloration of the book and my own altogether disparate private attitude toward the maniacal country of our origin. Adorno, fascinated by the musical material and, moreover, touched by the little memorial [*kleine Erinnerungsmal*] to his lesson, came up to me and said: 'I could listen all night!'" (*EDF*, 47; *GDF*, 48).

The little memorial, his father's surname woven as a meaningless metrical example into the teacher's discourse, did indeed touch Adorno, perhaps more than Mann could have suspected. For it intersected with a transformation in Adorno's own public signature, one imposed first from without, by American bureaucracy, but one to which he had recently acceded. A month before Mann's reading, on November 26, 1943, when the émigré musicologist signed the United States' Certificate of Naturalization, though he notarized the photograph with "Theodore L. Wiesengrund," where the document demanded the "Complete and true signature of holder," it is precisely that patronymic Wiesengrund that is dropped by "Theodore Adorno."¹⁰ A month or so later Mann's reading revives the abandoned signature and Adorno's ambivalence about it. That Mann has introduced into the novel "the word Wiesengrund in

9. Franz Villinger, a Hamburg merchant, was Adorno's cousin, the son of his aunt on his father's side.

10. See the reproduction of the document illustrating Gabriele Ewenz et al., *Adorno: Eine Biographie herausgegeben vom Theodor W. Adorno Archiv* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2003), 190. Hereafter cited as *ABM*. All translations are mine.

a most artistic manner,” Adorno writes his parents in that same January letter, is “a pretty recompense for the loss of the orderly Jewish name through the stupid pedantry of an official against whom, once something had lodged itself in his head, I could do nothing (as you know the whole name-change was always repugnant to me, but it is practical—and on the naturalization document at least the earlier name is expressly preserved)” (*BE*, 237 [January 17, 1944]).

What sort of intergenerational continuity is borne by this displacement of the patronymic into the acclaimed novelist’s late work? From Adorno’s perspective, the collaboration with Mann maintains in the face of the barbaric rupture that has forced them all into exile a link with the parental generation and the culture behind it. But Mann’s perspective is not directly reciprocal. Adorno is not a continuation, a disciple. He is far more a symptom. Inasmuch as Adorno’s musical expertise demonstrated the extent to which contemporary art is beholden to critical conceptual translation, where theoretical interpretation is no longer a subordinate and supplemental reception but the externalization of art’s implicit expression, to that extent Adorno represents modern cultural decay.

For the time being these differences in outlook could hide behind the common legacy of Beethoven’s music. But as Mann’s effort on the novel continued, and he came a year later to write chapter 25, the theoretical interview between Leverkühn and the Devil, Adorno’s perspective on art became more and more an index of the decadent tradition and less and less of a resistance to it. This phase of the collaboration was largely hidden from Adorno at the time. After the January discussions of Beethoven, Adorno loses sight of Mann and his novel. Throughout the rest of 1944 and up through the war’s end in August, Mann makes but one or two brief appearances in Adorno’s correspondence. Then, toward the end of September 1945, we find Mann has taken an interest in Adorno’s current project, the *Minima Moralia*. “This evening we’re going to Thomas Mann’s,” Adorno writes to his parents on September 27, “who’s asked me to read to him from my aphorism book” (*BE*, 334). And soon after this, the collaboration has changed in character entirely.

“For the Secret Is between Them”

In the collaboration’s early stages, as the work on chapter 8 and Kretzschmar’s Beethoven lecture, Mann and Adorno played relatively determinate roles. The decision, whatever its motivation, to narrate the life of a composer in the Western tradition was the author Mann’s alone. Adorno, whose technical competence in music far outstripped Mann’s, provided the specifically musicological

expertise necessary to produce the intended effect. It was this unquestioned structural asymmetry that allowed Adorno to experience the collaboration in such filial terms, even if the protectiveness evident in his insistence on discretion also indicates a potential disquiet at the amount of authority Mann seemed to be granting him. The clear distinction of roles also permitted Adorno to overlook the large discrepancies between his own understanding of Beethoven's late compositions and Mann's understanding as it was expressed in Kretzschmar's lectures. For however grateful and enthusiastic he may have been, Adorno could hardly fail to have noticed that Mann's interpretation of opus 111, even where it cites Adorno's formulations directly, has very little to do with the interpretation in "Beethoven's Late Style."

In Kretzschmar's account, Beethoven's achievement is terminal: he exhausts the sonata form through the completeness of thematic variation in the arietta movement. During these variations an absolute and alien intention entirely dominates the small three-note theme "Wie-sengrund." "What now happens to this mild utterance, . . . with what its master blesses and to what condemns it, . . . all that one may well call vast, strange, extravagantly magnificent, without thereby giving it a name, because it is quite truly nameless" (*DF*, 72; *DF*, 54). This total unfolding denudes the expressive motif of any reserve of interiority, exposes and objectifies it entirely, and exhibits it as such in a moment of sublimity. "A moment comes," Kretzschmar claims, "an utterly extreme situation, when the poor little motif seems to hover alone and forsaken above a giddy yawning abyss—a procedure of blank sublimity, quickly followed by a timorous contraction, a start of horror that such a thing could happen" (*DF*, 73; *DF*, 55). Kretzschmar's breathless prosopopoeia evokes an objectified expression entirely exposed to an alien omnipotent intention—the abyss of Beethoven's unfathomable genius. Reduced to mere acoustic presence, the autonomous motif is conjured up into abjection, only to be extinguished in a final incarnation, through an inscrutable gesture of extreme unction heard in the Meister's minute, last elaboration.

After an introductory C, it puts a C sharp before the D, so that it no longer scans "heav-en's blue," "mead-owland," [*Wie-sengrund*] but "O-thou heaven's blue," "Green-est meadowland," "Fare-thee well for aye." . . . It blesses the object, the frightfully harried formulation, with overpowering humanization, lies in parting so gently on the hearer's heart in eternal farewell that his eyes run over. "Now for-get the pain," it says. "Great was—God in us." "'Twas all—but a dream," "Friendly—be to me." Then it breaks off. (*DF*, 73; *DF*, 55)

This transformation of the meaningless dactyl “Wie-sengrund” into the significant, if platitudinous, statements ending the piece, in Mann’s interpretation, manifests over and above the immediate acoustic material Beethoven’s authoritative aesthetic intention. The meaning of Beethoven’s opus 111 is consummated at its close, in drawn-out gestures of departure and the attendant expressions of farewell. The pathos of terminal exhaustion informs that final variation on the three-note theme and in so doing boosts it into a specifically lexical sort of significance.

It is while delineating this exhaustive variation that Mann has Kretzschmar resort to Adorno’s formulations. “‘Those chains of trills!’ he yelled. ‘These flourishes and cadenzas! Do you hear the conventions that are left in? Here—the language—is no longer—purified of the flourishes—but the flourishes—of the appearance—of their subjective—domination’” (*DF*, 72; *DF*, 54). The fractured aphorism is from “Beethoven’s Late Style.” “In this way, in late Beethoven, the conventions become expression in the naked depiction of themselves,” Adorno had written there. “This is assisted by the often-noted abbreviation of his style, which aims not so much to purify the musical language of its empty phrases, as to liberate these phrases from the illusion of subjective control: the emancipated phrase, released from the dynamic flow, speaks for itself” (*GS*, 17:16; *BPM*, 125).¹¹

But despite the identical expressions, the point Adorno is here making is subtly opposed to Kretzschmar’s terminal audition. Kretzschmar speaks of “flourishes,” but his attention is on the tiny theme itself. Adorno is concerned with the conventional devices, the empty ornamentations, that integrate the thematic material into traditional forms. At issue in Beethoven’s late works for Adorno is not exhaustiveness, as Kretzschmar thinks, but abbreviation. This abbreviation is not, Adorno is here arguing, a functionalist elimination of ornament, a masterful impatience with the inessential and merely decorative. Quite the contrary. The ornaments and decorations remain; what has vanished is precisely the intentional subjectivity holding sway over their deployment. The exhaustive integration of every given element into a subjective expression is, so says Adorno, the principle of Beethoven’s *middle* period: “In this way the middle Beethoven absorbed the traditional trappings into his subjective dynamic by forming latent middle voices, by rhythm, tension or whatever other means,

11. In the original German the expressions are identical: “Da—wird—die Sprache—nicht mehr von Floskel—gereinigt, sondern die Floskel—vom Schein—ihrer subjektiven—Beherrschtheit” (*DF*, 72); and Adorno’s phrase: “Sie will die musikalische Sprache nicht sowohl von der Floskel reinigen als vielmehr die Floskel vom Schein ihrer subjektiven Beherrschtheit.”

transforming them in keeping with his intention" (*GS*, 17:14; *BPM*, 124). The correlation of subjectivity with manifest intention is the key to Beethoven's great middle period. The late works, however, with their formal irregularities and unexpected changes of tempo and tone, contrast precisely with an aesthetic of transcendent intentional mastery.

The ruptures in opus 111 do not manifest directly Beethoven's titanic subjectivity overwhelming the anonymous regularities of conventional expression, but draw attention instead to an unsettling surrender to conventional musical gestures. The late works are "full of decorative trills, cadences and fiorituras. The convention is often made visible in unconcealed, untransformed bareness" (*GS*, 17:14–15; *BPM*, 124). To understand the meaning of the hackneyed elements that appear in Beethoven's last and most sublime compositions, a new relation must be established between subjectivity and the conventions used for its expression. Their relationship "must be understood as the formal law from which the content of the late works springs" (*GS*, 17:15; *BPM*, 125). The presence of these clichés implies a metaperspective, which registers the relation of subjectivity to its means of expression as problematic per se, as in need of conceptual reconstruction. The interstices between musical expressions gesture beyond themselves toward a radically exterior site outside art at which that metaperspective would appear and from which that reconstruction would proceed. "The force of subjectivity in late works is the irascible gesture with which it leaves them. It bursts them asunder, not in order to express itself but, expressionlessly, to cast off the illusion of art" (*GS*, 17:15; *BPM*, 125). In the context of a final contrast with a silent negativity that is in principle outside expression, the manifest musical sounds are rendered mere examples of themselves, recognizably musical sound unburdened by originality, for expressive authenticity has been displaced irrevocably into their phenomenologically absent interstices.

The caesurae, however, the abrupt stops which characterize the latest Beethoven more than any other feature, are those moments of breaking free; the work falls silent as it is deserted, turning its hollowness outwards. Only then is the next fragment added, ordered to its place by escaping subjectivity and colluding for better or worse with what has gone before; for the secret is between them, and it cannot be conjured up except through the figure they form together. (*GS*, 17:16–17; *BPM*, 126)

The Meister's ambiguous extreme unctio that Mann hears in Kretzschmar's dialectic of opus 111 would from Adorno's perspective be no more than an unctuous platitude. Precisely in its resistance to such melodramatic

investments the C minor sonata shifts the significant emphasis of music. It displays the mortal fault lines in communicative experience and, in so doing, negatively sustains a last objection to the silencing weight of a death-laden tradition. It cuts expressive condensations loose from the composer's expressing intention and grants him a merely negative manifestation in the ruptures of their abrupt collisions with one another.

Mann, however, has displaced the emphasis in Adorno's account. An aesthetic philosophy that undermines the unity and coherence of the work is made to insist upon that unity, even unto the closure of an entire genre. But this is possible only because Adorno himself has retained a transcendent teleological instance: the intentionality of Beethoven's style as a vital whole. Though Adorno emphatically subverts the totality implicit in the concept of the work, he does so in the name of a totality implicit in the author's oeuvre. It is in relation to that implicit totality and not to their larger traditional or historical situations that these exemplary works are "late." The pathos of late Beethoven may point beyond pathos but only toward the abstract negativity of death in the singular. Adorno's audition unfolds between the reciprocal idealist abstractions of subjectivity and its conditioning negativity. Expressionless it may be, but nonetheless "it is subjectivity which forces together the extremes within the moment," he maintains (*GS*, 17:16; *BPM*, 126). For these mere discrepancies within expression to have existential resonance, Adorno must invoke substantial myth. "As splinters, derelict and abandoned, they finally themselves become expression; expression no longer of the isolated ego but of the mythical nature of the creature and its fall, the stages of which the late works mark out symbolically, as if in moments of pausing" (*GS*, 17:16; *BPM*, 125). And this means as well that the rifts and divisions in Beethoven's works do not expose the music either to historical contingency or to historical transformation. Rather, that music remains circumscribed by its recognizability within the fatal destiny of "Beethoven."

"Beethoven's Late Style" subverts the work in the name of Beethoven. Adorno argues on behalf of the composer, but the meaning of Beethoven's music has been so externalized that the hearer must substitute himself or herself for the composer not empirically but on the basis of their common mortality, to recognize what motivates the silent fissures in his style. It is this substitution that reanimates the fractured works and that Kretzschmar fails to understand. The collaboration between Mann and Adorno on *Doktor Faustus* circulates through a deep structure: *Adorno plays Beethoven for Mann*. But the structure is ambiguous. Mann experiences it as Adorno mediating Beethoven's expression to him. Adorno experiences it as Mann validating his

substitution for Beethoven. For Mann, this latter schema would be rank presumption. But it is the consequence of Adorno's Beethoven essay that in such works as opus 111, that first, more familiar circuit is no longer possible. Adorno's theory presents precisely its preemption by the latter arrangement, for when the composer "deserts the work," he in effect abandons the transitive model of expression-through-a-medium and adopts an essentially passive posture toward whatever replaces him in his role and so reactivates his motives for that desertion. What for Mann would be usurpation of the artist's expressive prerogative is thus for Adorno a gesture of rescue.

Protocol and Montage

So, montage is conflict.
—Sergei Eisenstein

In his published writings Adorno never explicitly argues for his own authorial status with regard to *Doktor Faustus*. This is of a piece with the discretion on the matter he had earlier asked of his parents. What references there are, are surreptitious and indirect. Nonetheless, to the reader who knows the history, Adorno's implicit rejection of the uniqueness of Mann's authorship of the novel is easy enough to recognize. In "Toward a Portrait of Thomas Mann" from 1962, the meaning of their common project is the subterranean organizing principle of Adorno's reflections. Here it is the author and not the works, the authorial figure's potential plurality and not its unity, that concerns Adorno. "For all the strength of his ego, its identity did not have the last word: there were good reasons why he had two extremely different handwritings, which in the last analysis were of course one and the same."¹² No doubt with the opening of the *Emergence* and its fatal substitution in mind, Adorno summarizes Mann's attitude toward his own extinction:

Ultimately, what caused his work to emphasize complicity with death, a complicity people were all too eager to believe of him personally, was an intimation of the guilt of existing at all, of depriving something different, something possible, of its own reality by taking its place. . . . In a world of high-handed and self-centered people, the only better alternative is to loosen the bonds of identity and not become rigid. What people hold against

12. Theodor W. Adorno, "Zu einem Porträt Thomas Manns," in *GS*, 11:339; Adorno, "Toward a Portrait of Thomas Mann," in *Notes to Literature*, trans. Shierry Weber NicholSEN, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 2:15–16. Hereafter cited as *NL*.

Thomas Mann, taking it for decadence, was its opposite, nature's capacity to be mindful of itself as something fragile. Humanness is none other than that. (GS, 11:343–44; NL, 2:19)

These allusions (and there are others throughout Adorno's oeuvre)¹³ suggest the collaboration with Mann was more central to Adorno's development, for both his expressive self-confidence and, just as certainly, his theoretical cogency in conceptualizing the postwar cultural landscape, than has been widely recognized. The Californian work with Mann at the borders of musicology and literary narrative beyond the name of the exiled father organizes a sequence of collaborations that structure and in part supplement his exiled environment: *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with Max Horkheimer, of course, but also the ill-fated book on film music with Hanns Eisler, as well as the academic research groups on radio music and the authoritarian personality. And in its familial resonance, the collaboration with Mann is an externalized paternal endorsement of the continual intimate collaboration with his wife, Gretel, at the invisible origin of Adorno's astonishing productivity.

In *The Emergence of Doctor Faustus*, Mann subsumes Adorno's contribution under the rubric of "montage." "This montage technique was continually startling, even to me, and gave me cause to worry. Yet it rightly belongs to the conception, to the 'idea,' of the book; it has to do with the strange and licentious spiritual relaxation" (EDF, 33; GDF, 32). In his brief exposition of the *Montageprinzip*, Mann quickly severs any link to its visual provenance in surrealist and cinematic art by equating it with quotation. "Quotations as such have something specifically musical about them, disregarding the innate mechanical quality. They are, moreover, reality transformed into fiction, fiction that absorbs the real, and thus a strangely protean and attractive mingling of the spheres" (EDF, 34; GDF, 33). This is all too vague and general to secure a genuine method, and the heterogeneous examples he draws together—the absence of Nietzsche's name in the novel, the historical precedents behind

13. His essay from 1955 on Bizet, for instance, where, during a Nietzschean argument for the peculiarly profound superficiality of *Carmen*, Adorno invokes Leverkühn's composition *Apocalipsis cum figuris*, a composition he himself had devised, with no indication of its or its composer's fictional status, much less Mann's ostensible role as author: "It is presumably this procedure and not the influence of more modern composers that inspired Adrian Leverkühn in his belief that dissonance should express the exalted and the spiritual, while hell is reserved for the banal and commonplace world of harmony and tonality" (Theodor W. Adorno, "Fantasia sopra *Carmen*," in GS, 16:300; Adorno, "Fantasia sopra *Carmen*," in *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone [New York: Verso, 1992], 56). The reconsideration "Stravinsky: A Dialectical Portrait," in *Quasi una Fantasia*, 145–75, also makes a subtly proprietary reference to the novel, without mentioning Mann (150). The original, "Strawinsky: Ein dialektisches Bild," does not mention Mann's name (GS, 16:386).

many of its incidents, the extensive literary research, Adorno's contributions— are in their turn insufficient to grant montage any unifying procedural feature. Translated into quotation, the term *montage* labels less a theorized operation than the author's bare assertion of continued responsibility despite his lascivious surrender to foreign intentions.

Toward the end of 1947, with the collaboration behind him, Adorno produced one of his most controversial texts, the elaborate pasquinade on Igor Stravinsky's oeuvre that makes up the second part of *Philosophy of New Music*. The first part, "Schoenberg and Progress," which Mann had used to formulate the Devil's aesthetic theory, advocated Schoenberg's music. "Stravinsky and Restoration," its complementary disquisition, adopts an entirely negative posture toward its object. Like Adorno's essays on jazz, or his work on Heidegger, the *Kulturindustrie*, or the radio, his discussion of Stravinsky follows a denunciatory rhetorical ductus. If Schoenberg represented the critical power of a genuine musical avant-garde, Stravinsky exemplifies the complicity with barbarism to which contemporary culture is also exposed. What Adorno objects to is Stravinsky's practice of montage. "It sounds," he writes of *Petrushka*, "the way pictures pasted together out of postage stamps appear—fractured and yet inescapably densely assembled montage, threatening as the worst nightmares."¹⁴ The *Histoire du soldat* can be compared to "the dream montages which the Surrealists constructed from the detritus of the waking day." A Stravinsky composition realizes itself "through the faults [*Risse*] which permeate its structure. These assume the role which earlier was the province of expression: recalling what Eisenstein once remarked about film montage" (*GS*, 12:168, 171; *PNM*, 135, 138).

The critique's disparaging tone leaves no doubt that Adorno takes Stravinsky's montages to be regressive and barbaric, but the citation from Eisenstein invokes what is at stake in the practice at a level of descriptive generality beyond praise or blame. What Eisenstein had said of film montage was, Adorno summarizes, that the "general concept," the synthesis of the partial components of an artistic expression, proceeds directly out of their juxtaposition as distinct.¹⁵ Eisenstein's term thus labels the very possibility of a con-

14. Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, in *GS*, 12:165; Adorno, *The Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 133–34. Hereafter cited as *PNM*. The translation has been in places amended.

15. "Montage has a realistic significance when the separate pieces produce, in juxtaposition, the generality, the synthesis of one's theme. This is the image, incorporating the theme" (Sergei Eisenstein, "Word and Image," in *The Film Sense*, trans. Jay Leyda [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947], 30).

ceptual recuperation of intention in the fissures of a decomposed expression, precisely the same significant possibility Adorno had heard operating in Beethoven's late work thirteen years earlier. Yet if the consequences of this possibility are now so dire, what has changed in the meantime?

The term *montage* is new to the Stravinsky section of the book. In the Schoenberg discussion, its functional analogue had been distributed between two different terms with quite other evaluative connotations: *Schock* and *Protokoll*. As *Protokoll*, music of the Second Viennese School witnesses the objective damage done to subjectivity by the alienated contemporary experience it confronts as shocking reality. "The first atonal works are protocols in the sense of psychoanalytical dream-protocols" (*GS*, 12:44; *PNM*, 35). A composition such as Schoenberg's *Erwartung* registers in its dissonances the traumas isolating each contemporary subject from the thoroughly rationalized objective collectivity. "The subject of new music, of which the music itself records the protocol [*worüber diese Protokoll führt*], is the emancipated, isolated, concrete subject of the late bourgeois phase" (*GS*, 12:59; *PNM*, 48). In the "dialectical process between expression and construction" that defines the historical practice of music composition (*GS*, 12:95; *PNM*, 77), the term *Protokoll* marks a dialectical extreme, a contradictory subsumption of spontaneous expression entirely under abstract rationalization: "Expressionistic music had interpreted so literally the principle of expression contained in traditionally Romantic music that it assumed the character of a protocol [*Protokollcharakter*]. In so doing, a sudden change takes place. Music, as a protocol of expression [*Ausdrucksprotokoll*], is no longer 'expressive'" (*GS*, 12:53; *PNM*, 42).

By protocolling expression rather than intending it, what Schoenberg's music documents, the null point of musical content and simultaneously the anchor of musical relevance, is *Schock*. "Passions are no longer simulated, but rather corporeal reactions of the unconscious, shocks, traumata are registered without disguise through the medium of music" (*GS*, 12:44; *PNM*, 35). This transformation of the principle through which musical meaning is achieved thus encompasses the very threat that makes modernity recognizable to itself, but the manifest emotional content it expresses has been reduced to what can pass between the accessaries to an impact.¹⁶

16. "If the compulsion [*Zwang*] toward well-integrated construction [*stimmigen Konstruktion*] is to be called objectivity [*Sachlichkeit*], then this objectivity is not simply a reaction to expressionism. It is expressionism in its difference from itself [*der Expressionismus in seinem Anderssein*]" (*GS*, 12:53; *PNM*, 42). The obvious reference to the traditionalist techniques of *neue Sachlichkeit* discovers beneath it a more fundamental philosophical maneuver proper to Adorno's thinking

Between the *Schock* that encounters the real and the *Protokoll* that presents that encounter, all intentionality evaporates. At this extreme, protocol in its scientific sense converges with protocol in its diplomatic sense. The irrelevance of subjective intention to proper or accurate presentation is the dimension common to both meanings, and what justifies Adorno's term. The retrospective lacuna between shock and protocol is filled by *Konstruktion*, and it is the particular virtue of the serial compositional technique that, because its tonal transitions are abstractly derived and not intentionally dictated, this construction proceeds without expressive interference between shock and the dissonance that presents it. The entire significance of dodecaphonic restrictions on tonal combinations is found in this negative resistance to intended content. In consequence, subjectivity appears in the music as passive, entirely as it is affected by its shocking surroundings. The activity of expression has been displaced into the cognitive process of interpretation at a site beyond the composer.¹⁷

But if the impersonal relationships dictating the manipulation of twelve-tone series allow the shocking passivity imposed by the enormity of contemporary experience to become audible, they do so at a high price. "Beethoven's Late Style" had vested musical significance in a moment of active substitution on the part of the auditor, as well. But the passivity for which that substitution compensated was our subjection to mythic death itself, from whose bourne no traveler returns. By 1942 and the Schoenberg essay, the passivity at issue was not the existential limit to life but an alienated helplessness in the world, a condition, however inexpressible, that still had the character of experience. Under these conditions, an active reconstitution of Viennese dissonance by the auditor belies the isolation to which the music testifies. It is upon this para-

itself. What is at stake here is a dialectical transformation between the principle of expression and the principle of "well-integrated construction." This is the movement that "protocol" mediates, and the mutation of communicative content into a mere protocol or record of traumatic specificity conditions a shift of emphasis from *what* expression expresses to the fact *that* there is expression. As a speculative trope, then, "protocol" marks the terminus at which a passive registration that something has occurred precedes any active claim as to what has occurred. Such a turning point is, as Adorno suggests, dialectical, inasmuch as it pivots through a moment of totality: the whole of specificity. But the relevant philosophical methodology informing the trope is not Hegelian but Husserlian. In transforming music into protocol, the dialectical *Umschlag* is more *epoche* than *Aufhebung*; it does not preserve the essential content of expression but sheds it to allow a manifestation of surface, brackets it as irrelevant in arriving at its new objectivity. Thus the moment of protocol shock displays affinities with the phenomenological *tode ti*, the *Sachen selbst* toward which Husserlian reflection would return us.

17. "To interpret language means to understand it; to interpret music, to make it," as Adorno pithily puts it in the "Fragment on Music and Language" (*GS*, 16:253).

dox that Adorno ends the Schoenberg discussion, severing the music of the Second Viennese School from any receptive instance. “Today, the alienation that is inscribed in the consistency of artistic technique forms the very substance of the artwork itself,” Adorno writes.

The shocks of incomprehensibility perpetrated by artistic technique in the era of its meaninglessness . . . illuminate the meaningless world. The new music sacrifices itself to this situation. It has taken upon itself all the darkness and guilt of the world. . . . No one wants anything to do with it, the individual as little as the collective. It dies away unheard, without even an echo. If time is refracted around heard music into a shining crystal, unheard music falls into empty time like an impotent bullet. New music has spontaneously aimed at the ultimate experience befalling mechanical music hourly: being utterly forgotten. It is the true message in a bottle. (*GS*, 12:126; *PNM*, 102)

Schoenberg’s compositions are, quite literally, unlistenable. The gesture of protocol they perform presents nothing more than the ascetic consequence of his resistance to the alien conventions within which subjective expression must proceed. Musical meaning is determined solely by its immanent connections; Schoenberg by this token “is the rebellion of music against its sense” (*GS*, 12:121; *PNM*, 98). Adorno’s Schoenberg interpretation strands authentic musical meaning at the edge of solipsism, and so completely that it calls into question Adorno’s interpretive role itself.

Mythic death had mediated the significance of Beethoven’s late works. Schoenberg’s compositions, by contrast, are not mediated at all but simply advocated. In his work with Mann, however, Adorno himself had experienced the usurpation of his expressive prerogative by a gesture of advocacy. Hence in the postcollaboration half of *Philosophy of New Music*, “montage” becomes his name for such an unmediated procedure. And in that discussion the expressive subject of the music no longer disappears into a solipsistic sacrifice but survives in an image precipitated by the music: the commedia dell’arte figure of the Harlequin. At the outset of the Stravinsky section, Adorno exploits the happy coincidence that both Schoenberg in *Pierrot lunaire* and Stravinsky in *Petrushka* had centered compositions on the figure. In both pieces, the clown represents the fate of subjectivity in the contemporary world, surviving its own destruction in this reduced and inconsequential form. The difference, Adorno asserts, lies in the identifications implicit in the music. Schoenberg’s music identifies with the clown; Stravinsky’s, with the derisive crowd. “In Stravinsky’s case, subjectivity assumes the character of sacrifice, but—and this is

where he mocks the tradition of humanistic art—the music does not identify with the sacrificial victim, but rather with what annihilates him. By liquidating the victim music alienates itself from all intentions, from its own subjectivity” (*GS*, 12:133; *PNM*, 109–10). This abdication is no longer sacrifice but evasion. Adorno’s mature theory accords the last word neither to composer nor to interpreter, but to collaboration.

Collaboration

As 1945 drew to a close, Mann proposed to Adorno a new sort of collaboration, one in which they both were to imagine Leverkühn’s fictional music. “What I need,” Mann writes in his letter of December 30, “are a couple of characteristic, realizing *exactitudes* (one can make do with quite few) that give the reader a plausible or more, a convincing image” (*BAM*, 21). The collaboration stretches over the following year and proceeds in two distinct stages. An initial conversation in January hashes out the details of Leverkühn’s first masterpiece, the *Apocalipsis cum figuris*. Mann’s health problems postpone further work until the summer, when, in July, the collaboration resumes on four of Leverkühn’s last compositions: the Violin Concerto, described in chapter 38; the *Ensemble for Three Strings, Three Woodwinds, and Piano* and the String Quartet from chapter 43; and by year’s end his culminating work, *Doktor Fausti Weheklag* (*The Lamentation of Doctor Faustus*).

Adorno’s correspondence with his parents has preserved a curiously immediate glimpse into the renewed work. In the midst of a letter on January 13, 1946, from Adorno’s wife, Gretel, to her parents-in-law we read: “—Thomas Mann has just come over and Teddie is advising him musically on his new (musical) novel.” Then, in a postscript to her signature Adorno himself concludes the missive:

Thomas Mann has just left. I send you many kisses

from your still quite lively child

Teddie

But if Gretel’s letter records the event, still no protocol has survived of the content of that conversation, which developed the main features of chapter 34 and the *Apocalipsis cum figuris*. Only after the two men returned to the project in July would Adorno bring anything of these discussions to paper. And while they are hardly finished works of art, nonetheless their preservation is

no accident. In a letter to Mann's daughter Erika some years after her father's death Adorno mentions that he has them, "all these notes are still around" (*BAM*, 166 [April 19, 1962]).¹⁸ Their survival registers a new seriousness on Adorno's part, a new authorial responsibility to posterity.

What intervenes between the January conversation on chapter 34 and the midsummer work on Leverkühn's last compositions is Mann's life-threatening pulmonary surgery. At the same time and out of sight of both *Doktor Faustus* and *The Emergence of Doctor Faustus*, those six months confronted Adorno's immediate family with a parallel patriarchal crisis. In April, just before Mann's operation, Adorno's father, Oscar Wiesengrund, in New York fell victim to a debilitating stroke. The son's letter to his mother of April 20, 1946, brings these two medical crises into immediate proximity. "Thomas Mann is seriously ill: on Monday will be operated on for a lung tumor. We hope it isn't malignant, and he pulls through. He has attached himself to me quite closely over the last half-year, and I am *very* fond of him. Tell W. K. [Adorno's father] a thousand times love from me—perhaps it will get through to him!" (*BE*, 361). Beyond individual sympathy with each of these terrifying eventualities, together they configure a crisis in the ad hoc system of intergenerational transmission the collaboration embodied for Adorno. The paternal function that anchors cultural authority, here riven into accessible and inaccessible imagoes, is imperiled as a whole.

Mann recovers. On July 8, 1946, Wiesengrund dies. The next day Adorno writes back to his mother:

There are two things from which I cannot free myself. The first: death in exile, though in comparison with the existence over there a piece of good fortune, strikes me as particularly gruesome—that a human being has the continuity of his life senselessly hammered in two, that he is so to speak not allowed to live his own life to the end but at the close has to be burdened by something as entirely external as "emigrant," as the representative of a genus more than an individual. (*BE*, 368 [July 9, 1946])

Death and exile converge in Adorno's remarks. What death in exile precludes is any hope of a homecoming, any hope that his father's life could encompass the fracture that befell it. This is what Adorno experiences as particularly gruesome on his father's behalf: that his father's alienation from his social reflection has become irrevocable. Hence the ambiguous rhetorical

18. This letter is quoted in "Nachbemerkung der Herausgeber." My translation.

force of Adorno's grammatical shift in the passage into impersonal constructions and generalizations—in practice the very consequence he discerns in exile itself. That his spontaneous language swerves in this approach registers the ultimate anonymity of death-in-exile as the postwar fate of a certain authoritative lineage.

Exile refracts any empathy with specific mortality into the alien categories of mass bureaucracy. It is this irreducible anonymity at bottom and the consequent exposure to oblivion that torments the mourning son and conditions his other gnawing regret. "The second: that, when the father dies, one's own life feels like robbery, brazenness, something pilfered from one's elder—the injustice of survival, as if one cheated the dead of light and air. The sense of this guilt is endlessly strong in me. Perhaps it sounds to you confused and overstated—it also has nothing to do with real guilt, for what could I have done differently!—and yet I just can't get free of it" (*BE*, 368).

Just as death-in-exile renders his father anonymous, its counterpart, survival-as-replacement, implicates Adorno in the irrevocability of that loss and aligns him beyond his moral intentions and passionate sympathies with the forces that persist through that abandonment of the particular. One immediate result of this perception is his new attention to documenting his role in the literary-theoretical collaboration with Mann. Posterity does not take care of itself.

Returning to the collaboration in July, then, Adorno now brings along his own preliminary compositions. In fragmentary phrases he records general characterizations and specific musical combinations, orchestrations and tempos, influences from and similarities to actual composers and compositions. These rough notes are destined in the first instance to be subsumed into the Faustus project. And in fact many of these formulations do reappear in *Doktor Faustus* in the descriptions of Leverkühn's final works. Yet in their own right, borne up by the pathos of Adorno's father's silence and death behind the novel, these notes also preserve the intellectual contours of a counterauthor, addressing 1945 and the ruptures that followed it from a site at which they assemble toward quite different cultural consequences.

They assemble under the auspices of the clown. Adorno's notes record, in oblique contrast to the ponderous melancholy of the eventual descriptions in the novel, two intellectual caricatures of himself and of Mann—a paradoxical self-portrait of the plurality of the collaboration. The sketch for the String Quartet constitutes a sly self-caricature on Adorno's part, and the symphonic cantata *The Lamentation of Doctor Faustus* depicts in the same allegorical terms the exhausted Mann.

Leverkühn's String Quartet, Adorno notes, is entirely decomposed into links that exist only elsewhere, in the conceptual recognition of an auditor. "It has absolutely no motivic connections, developments, variation—not even repetitions—something new is constantly following in an apparently [*scheinbar*] quite disorganized way, held together by similarity of tones or sounds or, more to the point, by contrasts" (*BAM*, 159).¹⁹ Such an attenuated connective principle offers the ceaseless innovation no resistance. In this the disintegration of the String Quartet is the exaggerated confession of the tendency in Adorno's own thought toward fecundity at the expense of structure. It has "not a trace of traditional forms." Without traditional form each musical expression loses its connection with what precedes it, and the musical meaning in consequence is displaced onto what succeeds it, *The Lamentation of Doctor Faustus*. "It is as if in this apparently [*scheinbar*] anarchistic piece Adrian drew breath for the symphonic cantata, the most tightly organized thing he ever wrote" (*BAM*, 159).

The String Quartet is poised at a limit of disintegration. Its coherence is so tenuous that only the two occurrences of the word *scheinbar*, "apparent," testify to it negatively. The ever new tones of the piece are only apparently quite disconnected, and again here, as the anarchistic character of the piece proves merely apparent. This is Leverkühn's "most esoteric work," the one closest to "prose," by which Adorno means furthest from immediate perceptual satisfactions. What holds it together is no longer musical at all but philosophical. It is in providing the philosophical justification for this limit case of musical coherence that Adorno ventures to speak for Leverkühn directly: "Adrian says: I learned in my philosophy seminar that to posit a boundary is already to have transgressed it, and I have always held to that" (*BAM*, 159–60).

Such ventriloquism is where Adorno impinges most directly on Mann's authorial prerogative, and in the notes he reserves these putative quotations for particularly pregnant statements of summation or principle. This philosophical confession in fact survives in the final novel, even if Mann's narrator, Serenus Zeitblom, has to gloss the remark. "I have learned in my philosophy courses, that to set limits already means to have passed them. I have always stuck to that. What he meant was Hegel's Kant-critique" (*DF*, 604; *DF*, 457). But the corresponding elements in the sketch for *The Lamentation of Doctor Faustus* do not make it into the novel's auditory ekphrasis; the two remarks Adorno attributes to Leverkühn in that context appear only in his own notes.

19. These archival drafts have been published as an "Anhang" ("Appendix") to the Adorno-Mann correspondence. My translations.

As Adorno describes it in “Ad Klage Dr. Fausti,” Leverkühn’s final composition is an almost symmetrical inversion of the String Quartet (*BAM*, 160). Where that piece had consisted of relentless innovation only apparently without recognizable unity yet held together by philosophical reconstruction, this lamentation, whatever superficial variety it may display, is, Adorno begins, “actually undynamic, without development” (*BAM*, 160). An apparent chaos that in fact has a philosophical identity is here countered by a fundamentally static identity whose apparent variety is merely its ceaseless lamentation for itself. The ultimate identity of the piece is manifested as the technical primacy of variation. “Every variation, an entire movement, corresponds to a new circle of lament and draws a new one inevitably after it. ‘As when one throws a stone in water,’ says Adrian” (*BAM*, 160). At the center of this final caricature, the image of concentric waves, however expansive, must isolate the lamentation at its source. And so it is only fitting that Adorno’s orchestration would represent that: “Everything, even single voices, choirish. Only Faust solo (Bariton)” (*BAM*, 161).

But this orchestration does not survive into the novel, which insists: “There is no solo in the *Faustus*” (*DF*, 643; *DF*, 487). And Leverkühn’s simile, unlike his philosophical dictum in the String Quartet, disappears from Mann’s reworking of the final cantata. There, the image of concentric waves expanding from a central site to overflow creation yields to a very different metaphoric vehicle: the echo. Though Adorno mentions in passing “Echo effects (every variation echo, reforming what preceded it)” (*BAM*, 161), he places no particular emphasis on the phenomenon but cordons it within temporal self-relation, as a further example of the general motif of repetition and identity. The echo in the novel, by contrast, appears in the form of reply. “The echo, the giving back of the human voice as nature-sound, and the revelation of it as nature-sound, is essentially a lament” (*DF*, 641; *DF*, 486). In Adorno’s notes Leverkühn defines lamentation quite differently: “There is nothing new; that is the lament” (*BAM*, 160).

Innovation and continuity, repetition and disintegration, the immediate postwar cultural milieu in exile is deposited into these two mutually correcting caricatures, suspended between art and its analysis, music and its silence. Majestic and entirely self-conscious, *Doktor Fausti Weheklag* in Adorno’s preliminary version preserves the complementary intellectual caricature of Mann as the absence of precisely that innovatory element whose ubiquity pushes his own self-portrait in the String Quartet to the edge of disintegration. In their incommensurable alternatives these pieces bear the imprint of a historical rupture as specific as their authors’ lives and as general as our immediate present. It is the echo of a new and inevitable fragility that resonates around us.

Conclusion: Defending the Half-Countess

On Sunday afternoon I had a long conversation with Chaplin and yesterday we had tea with Thomas Mann.

—Adorno to his parents, June 6, 1946

Among Theodor and Gretel Adorno's expatriate acquaintances during their years in Los Angeles was the Viennese film actress Luli Deste. "I'm using a free moment to tell you about one of the most remarkable people—were it not for Walter Benjamin, I would say: the most remarkable person—we have ever met in our lives," Adorno writes to his parents in New York shortly after he arrives in Pacific Palisades in 1943. "It is the film actress Luli Deste, whose real name is Countess Gortz, born Baroness Bodenhausen. In the last 4 weeks an unusually intensive friendship has developed between her and the two of us, so intensive that an old button like myself would not have thought it even still possible with a 'new' person" (*BE*, 199 [June 10, 1943]).

The sudden intimacy between Luli Deste and the Adornos testifies to an exile atmosphere of homesickness and unexpected encounters, but the comparison with Adorno's recently deceased friend and intellectual mentor Benjamin is harder to decipher. Perhaps it passes through what Adorno felt to be Benjamin's incongruently sympathetic theoretical attitude toward cinema itself as a mass phenomenon; perhaps through the parallel downward slope toward shabby gentility of his and Luli Deste's economic destinies.²⁰ Advancing hopefully into the intercultural precedent set by Greta Garbo's prewar success on American movie screens, Julie von Bodenhausen had begun her American movie career promisingly in 1937, with a role opposite Edward G. Robinson in *Thunder in the City*. But by 1940 her appearance as Queen Fria in *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe* was uncredited, and after a role in a Hopalong Cassidy film that same year, Luli Deste's Hollywood career was behind her. When the Adornos met her in 1943, she was a fellow refugee in need. Adorno initially hoped to help. "On Sunday, at Gretel's actual birthday party, we had brought her together for the first time officially with 'prominent people,' among them [William] Dieterles [the film director]; Friday we'll introduce her to Brecht—God willing, something will come of it for her: Simply because she is different, really entirely different from everything else running around here,

20. Luli Deste's noble name is an onomastic potpourri, related as she was through birth to Baron von Bodenhausen and the Countess Degen-Schonburg and through two marriages to Baron von Meyern-Hohenberg and Graf von Schlitz genannt von Gortz von Wrisburg (see www.thepeerage.com/p9506.htm#i95054). In 1940 she had wed Paul Kollsman, the inventor of the barometric altimeter. Later in the decade, under the name Luli Kollsman, she would write *Come, Take My Hand*, "a terrible novel," as Adorno remarked to his mother (*BE*, 518 [July 18, 1949]), and not long after, in 1951, would die in New York City at the age of forty-nine.

she's as much a target of hatred as our theoretical writings are" (*BE*, 201 [June 10, 1943]).

In fact, nothing did come of the introductions, and the intimacy between the Adornos and Luli Deste soon cooled. But the strange constellation of American popular entertainment and Viennese nobility that rendered her a sudden Benjaminian allegory of Adorno's own theoretical position in America appears to have continued to resonate in his mind. Two years after this letter to his parents, just as Adorno's collaboration with Mann was about to reach its peripeteia, Luli Deste returned to him in a dream. A protocol from October 14, 1945, preserves it. Adorno dreams he is attending "a small social gathering at Dieterles." A casual remark on Adorno's part provokes from an unidentified "lady" a defensive reaction: "You might as well just call me Luli Lehn, she said extremely archly. At that the entire group started in on a most unfriendly sort of gossip about Luli. The term *Cabaret-slut* was dropped. I felt an irresistible urge to take Luli's part, entered the empty space and cried aloud: we are the dearest of friends with Countess G., I cannot tolerate an unfriendly word being uttered about her in my presence." As in the letter to his parents, it is Luli Deste's hybrid identity as American culture industry entertainer and European aristocrat that structures her transformation into an allegory of Adorno's own position. And indeed, the oneiric work has dissolved the actress into her proper names—the stage name distorted into the German for a foreign-language borrowing, the noble pedigree abbreviated. The tension this duality introduces into Adorno's exiled situation troubles Adorno's dreaming self-awareness: "I felt uncomfortable during my speech; I had the feeling: actually I'm just making myself seem important, and we're not in fact such good friends. Nonetheless I could not repress my tirade. To my astonishment it was received enthusiastically. A lady said: isn't it lovely, that such a half-countess should find such a knight." This posture of advocacy is imperative and at the same time discomfiting. In speaking up for a noble pedigree behind a commercialized cinematic artifact he may be merely aggrandizing himself, but then again the patronizing encomium his chivalry provokes is not greatly different from the condescension toward the clown. The pathos of this dream scenario overwhelms its content and now transfigures the dreamer into an ad hoc Punchinello. "Then a younger fellow approached me and tied a mask torn from a paper napkin to me and perched a dunce cap on my head in jest. I was unable to laugh along with the joke and had a feeling of violent fury and the urge to destroy" (*ABM*, 198).

Defending the Half-Countess, Adorno becomes the very figure whose annihilation he hears in Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* and Stravinsky's *Pet-*

rushka, and whose image he would soon reencounter in Mann's study. "In his workroom," Adorno recalled in his 1962 "Portrait," "hung a delightful photograph of his daughter Erika as a young woman, wearing a Pierrot costume. She resembled him physiognomically, and in the after-image of memory his own face takes on a Pierrot-like quality" (*GS*, 11:343; *NL*, 18). The collaboration on *Doktor Faustus* is overseen by this figure, in its contemporary reincarnation neither the Renaissance jester nor the modernist victim but the avatar of a new and utter risibility attending the fatal work of culture.

