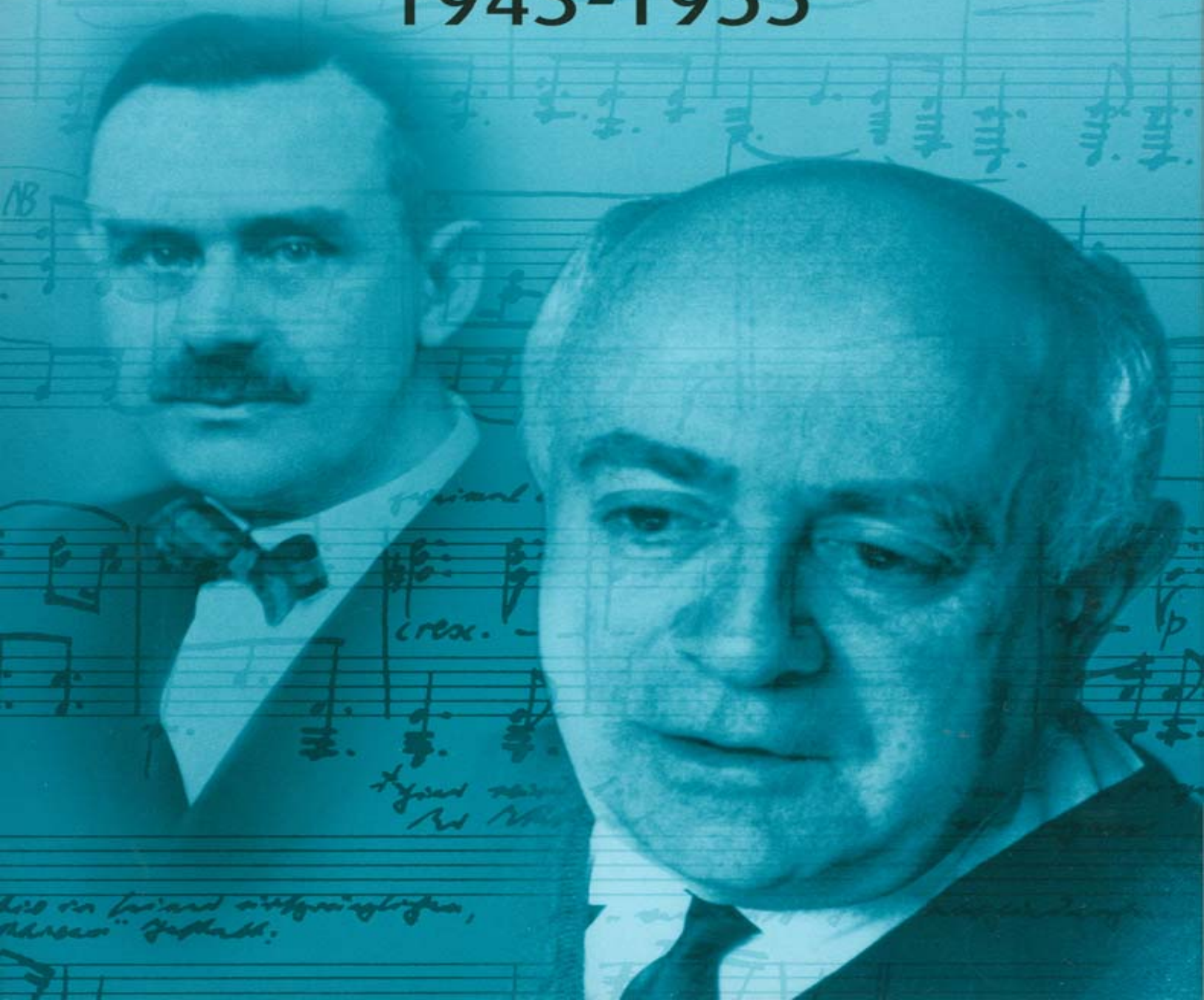


# THEODOR W. ADORNO & THOMAS MANN

## *Correspondence*

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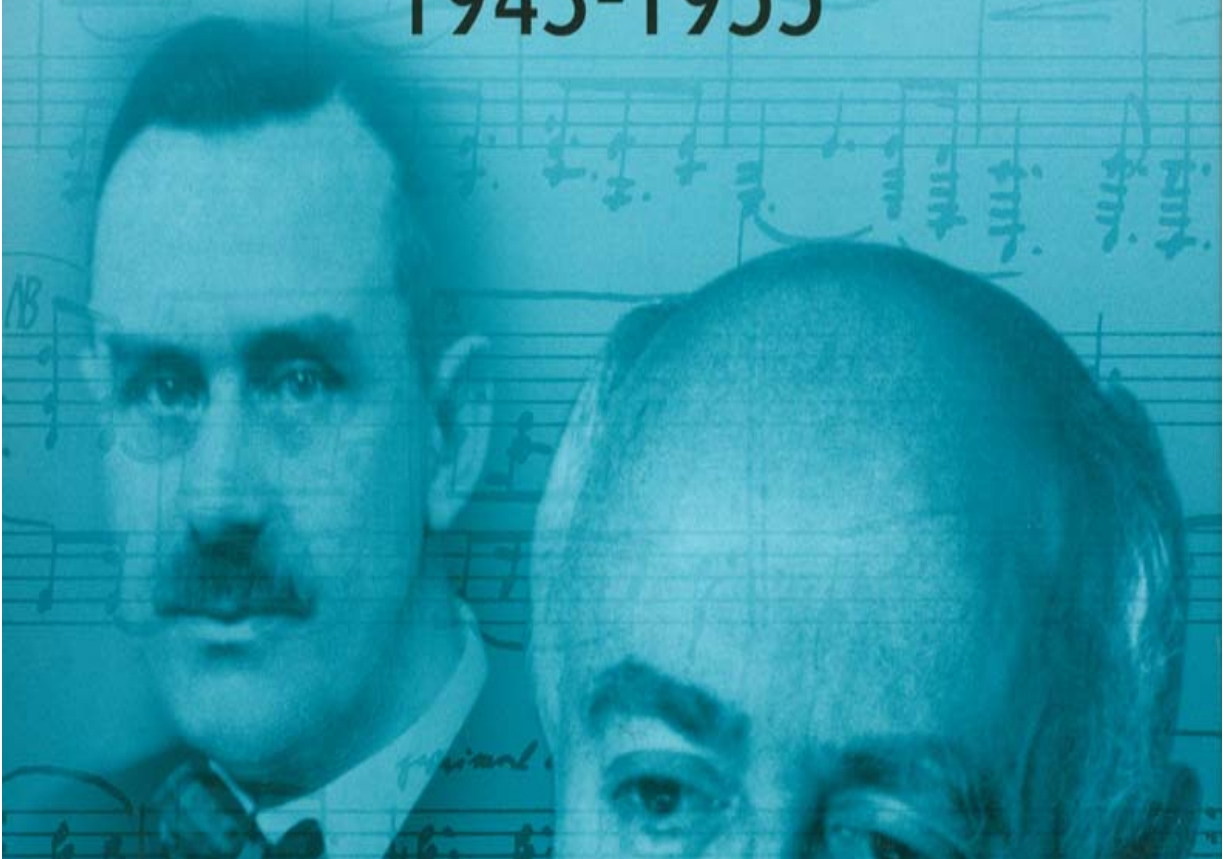




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& THOMAS MANN

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***1943-1955***

Edited by Christoph G d de  
and Thomas Sprecher  
Translated by Nicholas Walker

polity

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# Editors' Note

Thomas Mann's correspondence with Theodor W. Adorno was preceded and effectively prompted by his reading the philosopher's work. In July 1943, while he was working on chapter 7 of his novel *Doctor Faustus*, Mann was also studying Adorno's manuscript on 'Schönberg and Progress'. 'I encountered an artistic and sociological critique of our current situation of the most subtle, progressive and profound kind, and one which displayed a striking affinity to the central conception of my own work, to the very "composition" in which I was then immersed and involved. The matter was soon decided. "This is my man" ' (*Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, GWXI, p. 172). The relationship between tradition and avant-garde culture, the constellation of modernity and the past, defines the force-field of Mann's novel as well as that of Adorno's investigations of the dialectic of technological progress in music. These representatives of two different generations, with significantly different cultural and aesthetic backgrounds in each case, recognized a remarkable closeness to one another that subsequently led, over and beyond their specifically literary and musical collaboration, to a periodically renewed exchange of letters that touched repeatedly on broader social and political issues as well.

Adorno's manuscript on Schoenberg provided the initial stimulus for a rapidly developing social and intellectual relationship between the philosopher and the writer.



Personal invitations and mutual visits led to detailed discussions concerning both the composition of the whole novel and very specific musical details, such as those involved in Wendell Kretzschmar's lectures on Beethoven in chapter 8 of the book. On 30 December 1945, when his narrative was approaching the subject of Adrian Leverkühn's late works, Mann wrote his famous letter on 'the principle of montage' in *Doctor Faustus*, explicitly inviting Adorno to 'consider, with me, how such a work – and I mean Leverkühn's work – could more or less be practically realized'. Adorno, having already examined the manuscript of the novel up to this point in the narrative, proceeded to sketch examples of Leverkühn's final compositions, which Mann then 'versified', as he put it, developing and incorporating these ideas into the body of the novel – ideas which, as models of Adorno's 'exact imagination', give the lie to any blank or abstract opposition between the original sketch and the finished novel. In a letter to Erika Mann of 19 April 1962, Adorno described the nature of his collaboration with the writer in the following way:

Finally, a word concerning Leverkühn's musical compositions. It turned out that T. M. had already chosen the titles for most of the works in question which he immediately communicated to me; I then set about thinking them out in detail. I think it was only with the Brentano songs that we did not proceed in this fashion, and in this case I didn't go beyond giving some general musical suggestions. As for the rest, it was extremely straightforward: I thought about the problems exactly as I would have done as a composer actually confronted with the task of writing such works, just as someone, like Berg for example, would generally prepare a plan before setting to work. I noted down the relevant considerations, and still possess a number of these sketches, before proceeding to elaborate them as if there were not merely preparatory outlines, but descriptions of real pieces of music. T. M. would then contribute his own part. Many things would be changed in the course of our discussions, whether it was a matter of developing the overall conception of the novel more concretely through the description of specific musical details, or of emphasizing alternative aspects and features of the narrative, as in the chapter on the Devil, or whether finally, and this is the most important point, it was a question of cutting a number of things precisely because the work in hand was a novel rather than a musical guide book. I do not believe that his conception of these afternoon discussions, of which I naturally possess the

clearest and most precise recollection, would have differed in any way whatsoever from my own.

Even more than Thomas Mann, who was fascinated by the 'striking affinity' between the aesthetic ground-plan of his novel and Adorno's avant-garde aesthetic, Adorno himself must have regarded this effective collaboration as an epitome of his own utopian conception of knowledge – namely the construction of a concrete form of understanding that successfully reconciles the conceptual and the intuitive moments of experience through an activity of productive imagination.

Although relatively few of the letters exchanged between Mann and Adorno belong precisely to the period in which *Doctor Faustus* was actually completed, their active collaboration with regard to the putative compositions of the novel's protagonist Adrian Leverkühn nonetheless formed the basis and point of departure for their subsequent correspondence as well. Mann would later report back to Adorno about his 'fascinated reading' of *Minima Moralia* and respond in detail to the *Essay on Wagner*, a work which he confessed he was as eager to read as 'the one in the Book of Revelation who consumes a book which tastes "as sweet as honey" '. Adorno in turn communicated his own detailed comments upon, and enthusiastic support for, Mann's later novels such as *The Holy Sinner*, *The Black Swan* and *The Confessions of Felix Krull* – the last work being particularly close to Adorno's heart. The letters also addressed extremely private concerns of great personal significance to both of them, as in the candid and carefully considered discussion of the difficulties involved in returning to Europe after the end of the war. Although they were destined never to meet again in person after the autumn of 1949, when Adorno returned to Germany, their continuing correspondence testifies to their persisting mutual concern for and interest in one another. Adorno always remained

faithful to his personal encounter with Mann, something which he himself described in his letter of 3 June 1945 on commemoration of the writer's seventieth birthday as 'a moment of realized utopia'.

The editors of the present volume have benefited from the opportunity of consulting the transcription of, and a provisional and incomplete commentary upon, Thomas Mann's letters prepared by Prof. Dr Hans Wysling and Beatrice Trummer in the early 1990s. The current editors remain responsible for any errors in this edition of the correspondence.

At present the original letters from Adorno to Mann are preserved in the Thomas Mann Archive in Zurich. The original letters from Mann to Adorno are preserved in the Adorno Archive in Frankfurt. In a number of cases, where Adorno's letters have not survived in the Mann Archive, the transcription has been based upon the carbon copies of the originals in the Adorno Archive. The same procedure has been employed for the transcription of the texts printed in the Appendix.

All of the surviving letters and cards have been printed here complete in chronological sequence. The Appendix contains Adorno's notes and comments on the Arietta theme from Beethoven's Piano Sonata, op. 111, preserved in the Thomas Mann Archive in Zurich, and his notes and sketches for the putative compositions of Adrian Leverkühn mentioned or described in Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus*.

For the German edition the punctuation and orthography of the originals was generally maintained throughout. A few obvious and insignificant typing errors in the originals have been appropriately corrected without comment for the transcription. Editors' additions have been enclosed in square brackets. Emphases in the original letters, indicated by underlining or spaced print, have been rendered throughout by italics in the transcription. The letterheads

and concluding sections of the originals have also been reproduced as closely as possible in the printed text. The passages in Thomas Mann's diary entries which the author underlined in red when preparing the text of *The Story of a Novel: The Genesis of Doctor Faustus* are here also underlined. The brace brackets ( {...} ) in the passage on the 'Apocalipsis' cited in note 10 of Letter 5 enclose words or phrases which Mann included in the published text of *The Story of a Novel*.

The annotations to the letters provide further information concerning the individuals, writings and specific events which are mentioned or alluded to in the correspondence. These annotations are simply intended to clarify certain references and to provide some assistance to the contemporary reader, and do not attempt to supply a detailed running commentary to the correspondence or to provide a substantive contribution to the current state of research on the subject. For this reason, we have not supplied further references to the relevant secondary literature or taken specific account of related correspondence with third parties, such as that between Adorno and Erika Mann for example. It appeared to us more helpful not only to provide specific sources and references for the often detailed discussion of the literary and theoretical writings of the two correspondents, but also to clarify the discussion in question by citation from the relevant writings where appropriate. Similarly we have provided details of Thomas Mann's correspondence with other parties if it serves to illuminate the background and context of his letters to Adorno, as in the case of Thomas Mann's controversy with Arnold Schoenberg.

Information concerning the original textual sources for this edition of the correspondence, and reference to prior publication, in part or whole, of the same material where relevant, has been provided at the end of each letter

immediately before the annotations. The following abbreviations have been employed:

O: Original

Ms: Manuscript

Ts: Typescript

Fp: First published

Pp: Part published

The following abbreviations have been employed in the annotations with reference to the writings of Adorno and to the works, diaries and letters of Thomas Mann:

*GS*[1-20]: Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann in collaboration with Gretel Adorno, Susan Buck-Morss and Klaus Schultz, vols. 1-20, Frankfurt am Main, 1970-86.

*GW*[I-XIII]: Thomas Mann: *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, 2nd edn, Frankfurt am Main, 1974.

*Tagebücher*: Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn (1918-1922; 1931-1943) and Inge Jens (1944-1955), Frankfurt am Main, 1977-95.

*Briefe II*: Thomas Mann, *Briefe 1937-1947*, ed. Erika Mann, Frankfurt am Main, 1963.

*Briefe III*: Thomas Mann, *Briefe 1948-1955*, ed. Erika Mann, Frankfurt am Main, 1965.

*DüD*: *Dichter über ihre Dichtungen*, ed. Rudolf Hirsch and Werner Vordtriede, Vol. 14/III: *Thomas Mann, Teil III: 1944-1955*, ed. Hans Wysling in collaboration with Marianne Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1981.



The editors would also like to express their gratitude to the following individuals for their considerable assistance in the course of preparing this edition: Peter Cahn, Michael Maaser, Elisabeth Matthias, Veró van de Sand, Peter Stocker and, at the Thomas Mann Archive, Rosamerie Primault, Katrin Bedenig and Cornelia Bernini.

# ***Correspondence 1943-1955***

1 THOMAS MANN TO THEODOR W. ADORNO  
PACIFIC PALISADES, 5.10.1943

THOMAS MANN

1550  
SAN REMO DRIVE  
PACIFIC PALISADES, CALIFORNIA

5.X.43

Dear Dr Adorno,

Once again many thanks for yesterday's splendid evening.<sup>1</sup> Lest it should get mislaid, I also enclose your article<sup>2</sup> – very stimulating reading and extremely important for the figure of Kretzschmar who, in typically musical-historical fashion, had never advanced beyond the perspective which 'absolutizes the personality';<sup>3</sup> yet he, if anyone, should be able to appreciate how the proximity of death and greatness produces a certain objectivism (with a tendency towards the conventional) where the sovereignly subjective passes over into the mythic. So do not be too surprised if Kretschmar now starts to incorporate such thoughts into his own perorations!<sup>4</sup> I am not worried about *montage* in this connection,<sup>5</sup> and never really have been. What belongs in the book must go into it, and will be properly absorbed in the process.

I also wanted to ask if you could write out for me, in very simple form, the arietta theme of the variation movement,<sup>6</sup> and could identify the particular note that is *added* to the final repetitions and thus creates the remarkably consoling and humane effect at the close.

Was it also in the same movement<sup>7</sup> that the melody consists in the chordal texture rather than in the repeated unchanging upper notes? And which was the note that was repeated four times over alternating chords?

I need this degree of musical intimacy and characteristic detail, and can only acquire it from a remarkable connoisseur like yourself.

Heartfelt greetings from both of us,

Yours,

Thomas Mann

SOURCE: O: MS with printed letterhead; Theodor W. Adorno Archive, Frankfurt am Main. Fp: *DüD*, p. 15.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Mann and Theodor W. Adorno probably first met one another in 1942 or 1943 at the home of Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and his wife, Maidon (1887–1969), who on settling in California found themselves living in the vicinity of the Manns. The earliest direct evidence of personal acquaintance is to be found in Adorno's letter to his parents on 29 March 1943: 'This evening at Max's with a couple of celebrities including Thomas Mann accompanied by his gracious wife.' They seem to have got to know one another more closely only after Mann had begun work on his novel *Doctor Faustus* in the summer of 1943. At the beginning of July 1943, when Mann was working on the fourth chapter, Adorno showed him a book by Julius Bahl, *Eingebung und Tat im musikalischen Schaffen* (Leipzig, 1939) [Act and Inspiration in Musical Composition], and this became one of Mann's sources for the novel. But what proved decisive for their very close subsequent collaboration was the first part of Adorno's own *Philosophy of the New Music*, which Mann received in manuscript on 21 July 1943 and read at once (typescript in the Thomas Mann Archive, Zurich). In his diary entry for 26 July Mann writes: 'Just finished Adorno's text. Further reflections on how to proceed with Adrian.' On completing the eighth chapter, in which Adrian Leverkühn attends Wendell Kretschmar's first two lectures (on Beethoven's last Piano Sonata, op. 111, and on 'Beethoven and the Fugue'), Mann records an 'invitation to Dr Adorno, for whom I should like to recite chapter VIII' (Mann, *Tagebücher 1940–1943*, p. 629). On 27 September he read the entire chapter to Adorno and subsequently took careful note of the latter's critical comments and observations in revising the text. On 4 October Mann was invited to dinner at the Adornos. He noted in his diary: '7.15. Dinner at Adorno's home. After coffee showed the three-page insertion concerning the piano. Playing of Beethoven's sonata op. 111. Parallels in op. 31, 2. Easy piano pieces for Adrian. Much talk of music' (ibid., p. 634). Mann was occupied repeatedly with revisions to chapter 8 until the end of the year. In addition he made use of Adorno's essay 'Beethoven's Late Style', also mentioned in this letter. On 5 January 1944 Adorno was once again invited to dinner at the Manns: 'Afterwards op. 111 played again, with inscription of the performer's name' (*Tagebücher 1944–1946*, p. 5). Kretschmar now scans the motif from the arietta theme of the second movement of op. 111 – as a first expression of thanks for Adorno's assistance – not merely with 'Him-melsblau' [heav-en's blue] or 'Lie-besleid' [lov-er's pain], as in the original version, but also with 'Wie-sengrund' [mead-ow-land]. (See