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1

Thomas Mann in Princeton, 1938–41

A MAN OF QUALITIES

Yes, the homeless one has found a home. A new home in Princeton, in America. His gratitude is great. And since the desire to give is inseparable from such abundant taking, I shall pray my good genius that my gratitude may bear fruit.

—THOMAS MANN

Precisely when everything has assumed such vile form, an international sphere of freedom and the intellect will take shape, a private circle of betters who will always assure us a vital setting for our thoughts and works.

—THOMAS MANN

DURING THE FIRST TWO AND A HALF YEARS of his American exile, from September 28, 1938, to March 17, 1941, Thomas Mann lived with his wife and several of his six children in a spacious Georgian house at 65 Stockton Street in Princeton, New Jersey.¹ His feelings about his new home changed in different seasons. The first winter of his exile had its share of disturbances in the form of illness and public criticism;² and so, in summer 1939, Mann set sail for Europe, meaning to reinvigorate himself at a seaside resort in Holland and finish writing his novel *Lotte in Weimar* (*The Beloved Returns*). But as the political climate darkened, in September, on his return to Princeton, on board the SS *Washington* en route from Southampton to New York, he wrote in his

diary, “It will be a good thing to follow—and await—the unforeseeable development of the war, its vicissitudes and terrors, in my Princeton library” (T3 472). Six months later, in Princeton, on March 24, 1940, having had his fill of joyless days—weary and often in pain, depressed by nasty weather—Mann exclaimed in his diary, “Princeton bores me” (T4 49). But on the first of May 1940, still in Princeton, having slept well and woken to a sunny day, he noted briefly, but with feeling, “The beauty of blossoms. Magnolias” (T4 68). Finally, a year later, on the first of June, 1941, after leaving Princeton for Pacific Palisades, California, Mann declared in a letter to Erich Kahler, “In this, my favorite season of the year, it is lovely here, although I liked it better in Küsnacht [on Lake Zurich] and even in Princeton” (EF 53).³ In this sequence of brief epiphanies, we have a picture of Mann’s Princeton experience in the years 1938–41—a wave motion of moods of anguish, contentment, and monotony.⁴

Before settling in Princeton, having arrived in spring 1938 in New York from his home in Switzerland, Mann set out on a cross-country trip, delivering vigorous antifascist speeches in twenty-three cities.⁵ His talks in defense of democracy were extraordinarily popular: a feature article in *Life* magazine includes a photograph of some of the more than 2,000 members of the audience in Tulsa, Oklahoma, who “jammed Akdar Theatre, a former Shrine Temple, to hear him speak for an hour on *The Coming Victory of Democracy*.” That evening, March 18, 1938, Mann noted in his diaries that he had “spoken with liveliness and with no mistakes, [to] the greatest attentiveness and with great applause” (T3 192). But two nights later, in a less exalted mood—having absorbed the “tension and panic” in Europe following Hitler’s annexation of Austria (T3 190)—he concluded that “whether war comes or not, it seems increasingly *inadvisable* for us to return to Switzerland. If things continue as they are, the monster will soon stop at nothing” (D 295). To leave America, which had been so hospitable, for Switzerland, would be to risk assassination by Nazi agents. There were precedents for such murders.

In fact, the idea of an American immigration was not entirely new. The prospect of a convenient stay in Princeton had already been put into Mann’s mind by his determined patroness Agnes E. Meyer, of whom Mann declared himself the *protégé*; and so “it was both developments, the deterioration of the general situation in Europe as well as the prospect of Princeton as a future residence, that ultimately decided Mann to settle in America” (BR.M 39).⁶

On May 5, 1938, Thomas and his wife Katia began the immigration formalities. Since all applications had to come from outside the country, they took the night train from Cleveland to Toronto in order to visit the American consulate the following day. Their move was eased throughout by the moral and financial

support of Mrs. Meyer, an influential woman active in Republican politics, and her wealthy husband, Eugene Meyer, publisher of *The Washington Post*. Though Mann's speeches had been well paid, and he received good royalties, Agnes Meyer undertook to find the gainful employment for him that he and his large family needed. She negotiated on his behalf with Harvard University and floated the idea of residence in Boston—she wanted him at all costs on the East Coast, within visiting distance—but the offer never came.⁷ Meanwhile, Princeton had become an inviting prospect, and, owing once again to Meyer's mediation, Mann received and accepted a Lectureship in the Humanities at the university. Meyer then won a substantial one-year's grant for him from the Rockefeller Foundation to support the appointment (B 9).⁸ On May 26, 1938, Mann wrote to Kahler his pleasure at his good luck:

My trip from East to West . . . has shown me how much trust, sympathy, and friendship are given us here. . . . For the autumn I am making an arrangement with Princeton for a kind of honorary professorship that will not impose an excessive burden upon me and will provide a basic livelihood. . . . The place has the advantage of being rural, with very good connections to New York. (EF 18–19)

At the end of September, Mann moved into his Princeton villa and immediately began to prepare to deliver his first lecture at the university, eight weeks later, on Goethe's *Faust*. His choice of Princeton, at that point a small, "dignified" city choked with trees,⁹ would confirm him in his preferences: as he wrote to Kahler the following year from his beach chair in a Dutch spa, "I have always appreciated the connection of the elemental and the comfortable" (EF 20).

His pleasure in the place emerges in the course of his urging Kahler to settle in Princeton.

The happiest news I gathered was your growing resolution to come over here. Do so! What's the sense of staying now? And how fine it would be to live as neighbors. Our house . . . is very comfortable and an improvement over all those of the past. I think it important always to fall upstairs. The people are well meaning through and through, filled with what seems to me an unshakable affability. You would breathe easier among them, would be touched and happy. The landscape is park-like, well suited to walks, with amazingly beautiful trees which now, in Indian summer, glow in the most magnificent colors. At night, to be sure, we already hear the leaves trickling down like rain, but people say that the clear, serene autumn often continues until nearly Christmas, and the winter is short. (EF 21)

Mann was ready to call a halt to his travels and—in anticipatory good spirits—to settle in.

But fully settling in proved impossible. The very day after his arrival, on hearing news of the Munich Agreement between Hitler and Neville Chamberlain, he was struck by moods of outrage and depression.¹⁰ “This entire ‘peace,’” he wrote, “is surely a rotten lie (*eine gemeine Lüge*)—and [the profit] of it [is] the monstrous strengthening of Germany, a crushing blow to the democratic idea.” His depression even made him afraid of his new life (T3 301, 303). But there would be no question of his cutting himself off from the European crisis for the sake of an artificial serenity. The crisis was forced by Germany—his once beloved country, in which he has the deepest imaginable roots.

And yet, at the same time, he could not respond with the same intensity to every outrage—nor did he want to. He was foremost the author of great novels and immersed in the writing of two more—*Lotte in Weimar* and *Joseph and His Brothers*—eager to complete both projects, writing them in German to maintain his *Deutschtum* (“Germanness”). “The next few chapters [of the final volume, *Joseph the Provider* (*Joseph, der Ernährer*)] must progress rapidly at Princeton,” he wrote, stressing the Apollonian side of the writing mania: “The worldly adventures that come may not disturb their calm and their cheerfulness” (T4 185). At another time, we hear of the rather Dionysian side of the writing drive: “*Excitation*. When will this tricky, life-annoying and life- and art-related demonism expire? Probably not until the very end . . .” (T4 199).¹¹ As Hans Rudolf Vaget observes: “The consciousness of being ‘a German writer and servant of the German language’ was and always remained the deepest root of his exile-existence.”¹² His greatest concern, announced on the very first day of his arrival in Princeton in a letter to Agnes Meyer, was that of “a German writer” who, despite the sympathy and trust he was receiving as an exile in America, cries out: “Where will my primordial German language (*mein ursprüngliches deutsches Wort*) still be heard?” (BR.M 133).¹³ Some months later, in writing to her, he described his endless obligations (and honors): “Next year I am going to have cards printed, with the resistant message: ‘I am a writer (*Dichter*) and I have to write (*dichten*)’” (BR.M 159).

As a result, expressions of his indignation at the Nazi horrors were necessarily selective, and not every visitor to Princeton was content with this triage. His muted response to what is reprehensibly called “Reichskristallnacht,” which he termed a merely temporary aberration in the great history of Germany—or, rather, Germanness—dismayed one scholar, Professor Sol Liptzin, who had visited Mann precisely in order to be encouraged by his reaction. On the other hand, Mann’s diary for that day does plainly reveal his

dismay, and so his visitor's disappointment might be traced to Mann's prudence and patrician—not quite American—reserve.¹⁴ And it should be added that on other occasions, he denounced anti-Semitism everywhere, as he did with persuasive fury in a March 3, 1940, radio broadcast titled "The Dangers Facing Democracy," sponsored by the United Jewish Appeal for Refugees and Overseas Needs, when he named by name the Nazi extermination of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe (T4 709).¹⁵

On his arrival in Princeton in 1938, Mann was sixty-three years old. In 1933, after the Nazi seizure of power, being abroad in Switzerland, he chose not to return to his once beloved country. The new regime saw him as its ideological enemy: in the years following the First World War, Mann made a number of public speeches critical of fascist values. His opponents recalled his former support for a war in 1914 on behalf of a uniquely precious German *Kultur*; they could not tolerate his reversal, a defense of Anglo-Saxon and European values enshrined in a democratic Weimar Republic. His change of heart turned heads—hotheads.

His first arguments were addressed to so-called conservative-national ideologues, as in his pivotal address on October 13, 1922, on "The German Republic," which harvested the values of romanticism (Novalis), vitalism (Nietzsche), aestheticism (Stefan George), and homoeroticism (Walt Whitman) as political supports.¹⁶ In the following years of great danger, he spoke directly to the Nazis, in 1930 bravely outfacing an audience of Nazi thugs with "An Appeal to Reason," which identified and repudiated the fanaticism of the movement. On February 13, 1933, barely two weeks after the Nazis' seizure of power, at the admitted risk of being misunderstood, he discussed the work of the conservative cultural hero Richard Wagner as an "amalgam of dilettante accomplishments." Indeed, the caveat merely provoked an outraged Nazi press.¹⁷ With this intervention, he would become persona non grata with the Reich.

In 1936, the Nazis stripped Mann of his German citizenship, condemning him to permanent exile (and probably with the risk of being murdered if he made a clandestine return). Soon afterwards, he received a letter from the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Bonn, informing him that in light of his expulsion from Germany, his honorary doctorate from that university would also be revoked. In a memorable, widely circulated reply, which he composed on New Year's Day, 1937, Mann wrote: "I could never have dreamed, it could never have been prophesied of me at my cradle, that I should spend my later years as an émigré—expropriated, outlawed, and committed to inevitable political protest. . . . I was born to be a representative and not a martyr."¹⁸ It is a tribute to an extraordinary strength of character that he never thereafter

relented in his sense of the importance of his life's work as author and *citizen* in the face of the unspeakably vile attacks on him that now flowed from the sewers of Nazi agitprop, chief among the hacks one Ernst Krieck.¹⁹ (Mann wanted him punished after the war.) Even in Switzerland, Mann had reason to fear for his life, despite his aery denial, on August 6, 1938, while inviting his brother Heinrich to Küsnacht: "I have never felt endangered here for as much as a moment" (BR.H 216). His friend, admirer, and gift-giver, the American psychiatrist Caroline Newton, reports that other attentive personalities thought differently. In the late winter of 1937, she was asked by Christian Gauss, then dean of the College at Princeton, whether she knew Thomas Mann. "'Why does it matter?' I asked. 'It matters damnably,' he said forcefully. 'His life is not safe in Switzerland. The Nazis will murder him, stage an automobile accident or send over some poisoned food'" (N 4).²⁰ By the spring of the following year, Mann had evidently come around to Gauss's view, writing to Agnes Meyer, "Quite apart from [my] emotional (*psychisch*) resistance, Switzerland would not even offer me physical security" (BR.M 115–16). There would be the rumor of lethal danger even in the short flights across Europe he took during the summer of 1939: it was said to be unwise to occupy a window seat, since German warplanes had been seen "looking into" passenger planes with the intention of shooting passengers if they had been identified as serious opponents of the Reich (H 1112).

At Princeton, as eager as Mann was to continue writing *Lotte in Weimar*—but obliged by his "honorary professorship" to compose important lectures for the university and conduct "preceptorials" for the "boys"—his insistent moral sense required him to speak out, to the point of alleged exhaustion, against the horrors in Europe. A diary note on Saturday, November 19, 1938, reports "Poor appetite, tendency to nausea." (His hypochondria, as more than one observer has noted, helped assure him a long, productive life.) But he continues in a major key: "Stronger mental state today, serious and willing to speak powerfully (*eine große Sprache zu reden*) in the name of the moral world and to strike a blow against the vermin" (T3 323). It had never been his intention to practice what the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan calls "*une politique de l'autruche*" (French: "ostrich" = "autruche"; "Austria" = "L'Autriche").²¹ The pun is timely: in his letter to Kahler of May 26, 1938, Mann had registered

the shock of the crime against Austria, [which] was severe; the parallel with 1933 forced itself upon us; we felt it as a "seizure of power" on the continental scale, and again we had the sensation of being cut off, as in 1933. All this

may prove to be exaggerated or premature. Nevertheless, we cannot regret our decision and our act of “immigration”; there are too many good reasons, in Europe and here, for making this country our residence at least for a time, although we shall keep in touch with the old continent as much as possible. (EF 18)

Mann then mentions the warm reception his book *Joseph in Egypt* had received in the United States—with this book he had completed the first three volumes of the tetralogy and would brood about and then begin the fourth in Princeton—and stresses again the friendship he had experienced in traveling across the country. “Friendship” is a key word in his moral vocabulary; it abounds throughout the pages of his fiction and polemics; it may be the highest good. He wrote, “If I have a wish for the posthumous fame of my work, it is this: that it would be said of it: it is life’s friend although it is aware of death.”²²

There is a touching irony in this statement. Friendship was not Mann’s strongest suit: his “few friends,” wrote Janet Flanner, in a notorious *New Yorker* profile, “[are] less numerous than the members of his own large family.”²³ Aside from Erich Kahler, Mann’s diaries suggest that he and Einstein were “good friends,” a claim that all scholarly commentators hitherto have repeated. But that is merely wishful thinking. Peter de Mendelssohn, the devoted editor of Mann’s diaries, has found *le mot juste*: their relation was little more than “freundnachbarlich,” good-neighborly (T3 701).²⁴ When Mann speaks of “new pleasures of love and [a renewed] zest for life,” he has in mind not new human acquaintances but rather the gift from Caroline Newton of “the delicate poodle (with the unexpected name *Gueulard* = ‘Big Mouth’ or ‘Glutton’) and the prospective first-class musical apparatus” (T3 494, 496). The poodle, a standard black—soon to be miniaturized and Germanized with the name Niko—will replace all others for a time as the central figure in Mann’s diaries (T3 495).²⁵ No one else, with the possible exception of Katia Mann, is mentioned so consistently. When the poodle, “gone wild and confused,” runs away, Mann is devastated, and when Niko returns, “although in a muddied state,” his master is overjoyed.²⁶

A delicate drama unfolds: will the poodle be allowed into Mann’s study, mornings, like Faust’s, when Faust is engaged in translating the New Testament and when the poodle will be unmasked as Mephistopheles?²⁷ True, on the very afternoon of Niko’s arrival—a “mute, shy, noble creature”—the poodle is allowed to sit at Mann’s feet while he is at work; but the work is only of a secondary kind, as Mann takes notes for his Princeton lecture on Goethe’s

Werther (T3 494). And so, Mann's poodle does sit beside young Goethe's other proxy—not Faust but *Werther*—but he does not growl, and he is not unmasked as a hellhound. Before too long the poodle is invited into Mann's study even during the sacred morning hours of Mann's devotions, though here Mann is still at work on his *Werther* lecture and not yet on his new Indian novella *The Transposed Heads* (T3 495).

In those days, he had been giving “much thought to *The Transposed Heads* and its whimsical (*wunderlich*) possibilities.” Writing on January 28, 1940, seated in the New York Pennsylvania Station (!), Mann noted this

first approach to the French-surrealistic sphere (Cocteau), to which I had long been drawn. A reading like “Eheglück” [Tolstoy's “Family Happiness”] in its realistic and moral seriousness of course does not encourage it. [One] feels the gap between this healthy-serious sphere and frolicsomeness and fantasy, which is much more afflicted (*leidend*, also “ailing”) than that naturalism. The attempt is to be continued. (T4 16)

It might now be a delicate decision for Mann to risk the effect of the (*French*) poodle—*Gueulard*—on his new form of imaginative writing; or would precisely its “whimsical” way of being serve as an inspiration? We will have to wait until August 18, 1940, during Mann's summer holiday in Brentwood, Los Angeles, to hear the phrase, “Niko as a roommate” (T4 134).

Meanwhile, Mann would have to suffer the knowledge that pet love never did run smooth, and so we have him writing at some length about a “disagreeable quarrel about his disobedience following the discovery of disagreeable things.” Whereupon Mann catches himself and writes of his “resolve, no longer to worry about such things” (T4 5). (He does literally “worry” about that other addition to a zest for life—“the overloud bass-resonance of the new gramophone” [T3 502].²⁸) But this is not to say that his concern for Niko will vanish entirely: he will worry when the poodle shows signs of being ill and will be relieved when the creature is well. And he will suffer again when Niko is attacked by Erwin Panofsky's “nasty poodle” (T4 5), although Niko himself is not altogether without a malicious bone in his body, for, as Mann reports, he will not be allowed to spend the night in the library, since, “as recently when we were in New York, he chewed up a philosophical work by Ernst Cassirer” (N 69).²⁹ There is an entire engaging short story buried in these diaries and letters, inviting the title “Herr Mann und Hund.”

In Princeton, Mann craved order and seclusion—the conditions of his continuing literary production—but these were wishes out of season. His time in

Princeton is charged with constant changes and portents of change. Europe is in convulsion, a product of Hitler's territorial aggressions, which Mann registers daily in his diaries. On October 8, 1938, a week after settling in, he recorded "the ghastly news of the deportation to Germany of the German émigrés in Prague. . . . [I am] confused, distracted, depressed, and revolted by the course of events in Europe, worried about America, weary" (T3 307). He had to be especially disturbed by the news as both a German émigré and a *Czech citizen*. He phoned the news to Einstein, who had once lived and taught in Prague and was now in Princeton, at 112 Mercer Street, a mere few city blocks away. In his diary Mann took rare note of Einstein's admission that "never before in his life had he been so unhappy" (T3 303).

When we follow the days of Mann's life, we watch feelings of grief and sympathy crystallize into action. Despite complaints of ill health and the overwhelming demands for help made on him, he could rely on reserves of energy and devotion to the good cause. The "good cause" was actually two, demanding two different kinds of support: one, practical, moral, aiming to shore up democratic ideals of friendship and justice against the barbarism of the times; the other, being, in words reported by Ernst Lothar, by means of his *novelistic* writing, "to wash off the stain that had sullied the German Geist."³⁰

And so, soon after his telephone conversation with Einstein, he wrote a detailed, precise, and heartfelt plea to Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State, asking Hull for his intervention in a tragic knot that was entailing heartbreak and anxiety. Mann pleads for aid on behalf of the German émigré intellectuals in Czechoslovakia whose lives were now in danger and who had turned for help to members of the Thomas Mann Society in Prague. There was an agonizing bureaucratic obstacle blocking émigrés' safe passage to the United States. As Mann wrote to Hull: "The American consul in Prague is certainly only doing his duty when he demands that those concerned present birth certificates and evidence of good character from Germany," since—stated with a certain irony—"under the circumstances [of the Nazi seizure of power], such documents simply cannot be obtained" (L 284).

Mann's efforts on behalf of American democracy were for the greatest part appreciated in his adopted country. We will learn about the exceptions in "Contra Thomas Mann the American" in chapter 2. On November 10, 1938, *The New York Times* featured an article with a dramatic headline and

subheadlines: “Munich Pact Saved Fascism, Says Mann / So-Called ‘Democrats’ Acted Deliberately, He Tells Parley of Booksellers / Deplores Curb on Truth / Contrasts Atmosphere of His Native Land with U.S., His Adopted Country”:

Calling the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia a drama “in which European statesmen who still call themselves democrats went consciously and deliberately about to save fascism from its approaching fall,” Thomas Mann, Nobel Prize winner and exile from Germany, defined before several thousand persons yesterday what it meant to him to live in a country “where thought and expression are free.”

“[There is a general feeling] that the atmosphere of truth is healthier for man’s spiritual lungs, and more nourishing to his moral blood structure than an atmosphere of lies,” said the German author, who immigrated here recently and is now engaged in a lecture course at Princeton University. . . .

Drawing a parallel between life in America and life in Europe, he found that the fundamental difference was “exactly the difference between the [belief and the disbelief in truth as an inalienable human value],” and that regarding the Munich agreement “truth was subjected to a most careful embargo.”

Mann appealed to the nation: “In a desolate and morally leaderless world, may America stand the strong and unswerving protectress of the good and the godlike in man. [May she] do so . . . scorning violence and the lie.”³¹

Mann’s polemical legacy lives on. Some eighty years later, on December 14, 2017, *The New York Times* published a brief essay by David Brooks titled “The Glory of Democracy.” Brooks deplores the degradation of democracy, especially in America, and seeks to reawaken consciousness of its value. He adverts to first principles and writes:

I’m going to start with Thomas Mann’s “The Coming Victory of Democracy.” . . . Democracy begins with one great truth, he argued: the infinite dignity of individual men and women. . . . Democracy, Mann continues, is the only system built on respect for the infinite dignity of each individual man and woman, on each person’s moral striving for freedom, justice and truth. It would be a great error to think of and teach democracy as a procedural or political system, or as the principle of majority rule. It is a “spiritual and moral possession.” It is not just rules; it is a way of life. It encourages everybody to make the best of their capacities—holds that we have a moral

responsibility to do so. It encourages the artist to seek beauty, the neighbor to seek community, the psychologist to seek perception, the scientist to seek truth.³²

A democracy, which, as its first principle, would encourage “the artist to seek beauty,” must allow him to do so and protect him from harm during his “search.” Again, and again, Mann, as “one who needs order so very much,” sought such protection for his work within the elliptical whirl of events of which he himself was one axial point.³³ The thought that the *German* personality would need to battle forever for stability, for *une assiette ferme*, being uniquely vulnerable to radical change, was scarcely alien to him. In an earlier letter to Mann, Kahler summarized the gist of his important but never quite finished study of the German character in European history, a work that Mann admired:

With Germanness what is involved is a still fluid type, one which has not yet reached its specific character, which is still in the process of becoming. If, therefore, it is to be grasped as an organic whole, it must be excavated from its historical conditions and supplemented by imaginary possibilities. This dynamic folk cannot be represented in terms of essential traits but rather only in potential traits (*nicht in Wesenszügen, sondern nur in Werdenszügen*). (EF 4)³⁴

These “potential traits” might be realized in imaginative writing and bring about a precarious stability to the incessant flow of possibilities. Mann himself noted succinctly in a later diary entry “the complex [character] of the German nature and tradition, which is expressed in my work and gives it its variety” (T4 174).³⁵ But this variety is not (only) intrinsic to the German “artistic-character” (*Kunstcharakter*) of Mann’s literary practice. His political and ideological career is marked by sudden openings and sudden turnabouts, some self-determined and some owed to the force of events.

In due course, and with a certain painful, historical irony, Mann answered Kahler’s analysis with a lesson in steadfastness. On October 19, 1938, in the one letter Mann wrote to Kahler while in Princeton (almost all of their discussions were in person), Mann paints a mood darker than the moods in May.

You can imagine how I have been living; first the disturbing days of uncertainty in Paris, then the week of depression along with the painfully inadequate news aboard ship, then the hours of tense hope after arrival here, culminating in a gigantic mass meeting in Madison Square Garden, at which I spoke and witnessed tremendous demonstrations; then [the]

Munich [Agreement] and the realization at last of the filthy play which was being performed all along. The dénouement came when the “democratic” governments transmitted Hitler’s blackmail threats of war to their own people. . . . The shame, the disgust, the shattering of all hopes. For days I was literally sick at heart, and in these circumstances, we had to install ourselves here.

The letter takes a turn.

Now I am over the worst of it, have accepted the facts, whose meaning and logic is only too despicably clear. And now, I am tempted to think by magic, my desk stands in my study with every item arranged on it exactly as in Küsnacht [on Lake Zurich], and even in Munich. I am determined to continue my life and work with maximum persistence, exactly as I have always done, unaltered by events which injure me but cannot humiliate me or turn me from my purposes. The way that history has taken has been so filthy, such a carrion-strewn path of lies and baseness, that no one need be ashamed of refusing to travel along it, even if it should lead to goals we might commend if reached by other paths. (EF 20–21)

Mann might be imagining the ultimate tightening of bonds of decency among nations, the outgrowth of the experience of their common resistance. But that would clearly take decades.

Meanwhile, one is dealing with Hitler and a naively treacherous American press, publishing scurrilous comments on . . . [President Roosevelt] from the Italian and German papers. Impossible situation. Hitler also hand in glove with the Roosevelt opposition. Never against a nation as a whole, but always dividing it, pitting one group against another, subverting it, calling his partisans “the American people,” while branding all the others as Jews, Marxists, and warmongers. (T₃ 318)

How very perceptive of Mann to have detected a tactic evidently valid for demagogues at all times and places.

The current of change that runs through him and his circumstances, resisted by the effort of keeping a semblance of continuity, also shapes his situation in America as something between adaptation and assimilation—until the end, if we may look ahead, when, hounded by J. Edgar Hoover and his vassals as a Communist sympathizer, he left California in 1952 for Switzerland, not wishing to be buried in this now “soulless soil.” The effort of assimilation

might have gone even further than his assuming American citizenship in 1944 if, of course, Mann had fled Europe sooner and if, of course, he had not been the object of malicious political machinations at the time of America's *chasse aux communistes*. According to Alice Kahler, the second wife of Erich Kahler, Mann's leaving America was owed to

a tragic story from the McCarthy era. In that witch-hunt, Thomas Mann was accused of signing the so-called Stockholm Peace Petition, which was a Russian venture. At the Thomas Mann exhibition at Rutgers University, which [in 1975] commemorated his hundredth birthday, it was interesting to see where his son Michael showed, enlarged, this petition. I know Thomas Mann's signature very well; it was obvious that this signature had been falsified. Since he did not want to return to Germany, he went back to Switzerland, where the Manns bought the house in Kilchberg. The tragedy was that he no longer felt safe here.³⁶

Mann's grandson, Frido Mann, stresses that Mann's flight to Switzerland was not dictated by the prospect of enjoying once again the treasures of spoken German. Not at all! He had been traumatized by the repetition in America of a "politically barbarous situation" comparable with the German situation that had originally forced him from his homeland. "This catastrophic political development [in America] 'finished' him, and that is why he had to leave."³⁷ Detailed, sinisterly enthralling accounts of Mann's tribulations with the FBI, with Henry Luce, the publisher of *Life* magazine, and with the House Committee on Un-American Activities during his last years in America are accessible to the happy few Germanophone Mann-lovers in two of the best biographies—Hans Rudolf Vaget's *Thomas Mann der Amerikaner* and Klaus Harpprecht's *Thomas Mann: Eine Biographie*.³⁸

Despite his immersion in the academic and political trials of the day, Mann was steadfast in continuing his life as a writer. At Princeton, Mann completed one novel before beginning two others: he had written the first six chapters of *Lotte* in Switzerland and only then embarked on the difficult seventh chapter, the first appearance of Goethe in propria persona. In his diaries, Mann wonders how this material can best be represented—perhaps as a "monodrama and monologue" (T₃ 311). In a letter to his brother Heinrich, he remarks: "It would not be a novel at all, but something like a monograph in dialogue, were

it not for an element of excitement in the initial conception that seems to have been retained in the execution" (BR.H 232–33). After a serious struggle, he did finally complete this and the subsequent two chapters, writing, on October 26, 1939, "[I] introduced corrections into the finished copy of the final chapter, put the complete manuscript of the novel in order, and laid it aside" (T3 494). He then went on to the Indian novella *The Transposed Heads* (*Die vertauschten Köpfe*) and several "Hauptstücke" ("Principal Parts," even, grandly, "Centerpieces") of the last volume of the *Joseph and His Brothers* tetralogy. Although he wrote the best part of *The Transposed Heads* in Princeton, he would not finish the novella until August 1940, while spending the summer in Brentwood, California. At this time, he called the novella a "diversion and an intermezzo," a quality perhaps dictated by the mood—"the paradisiacal climate"—of the place: "Our house," he wrote, "is charming and looks directly out onto an almost Tuscan hilly landscape. We do not lack good friends and good music, and if one did not constantly have the smell of the fire of world history in one's nostrils, and in one's ears the SOS calls of the dying, life could be pleasant" (N 71–72). It was in the equally paradisiacal Pacific Palisades, California, that, "writing the final lines" on the morning of January 4, 1943, he would complete *Joseph the Provider* and therewith the grand tetralogy *Joseph and His Brothers* (T4 520).

During his years in Princeton, Mann was often away from home, lecturing in New York or at far-flung continental points (Iowa, Texas). He would brood on the value of these many journeys undertaken mainly out of a sense of moral and political responsibility, and regret as well even the time spent writing *The Transposed Heads*:

Always, between the torments and burdens of this social inevitability, the now pessimistic and incredulous thoughts of the outcome of the political process mingle with the question of the success of the personal life, the problem of mood and resilience for the completion of *Joseph* after the rather redundant novella digression. Travel like this is also a problem: very time consuming, but perhaps necessary to escape the monotony. (T4 36–37)

"Monotony"? But he has his literary work to do—his intensely imaginative writing—every morning—*without fail*, true—but that has always been his practice, and it is almost always rewarding, both in the doing of it and the resonance it will have. After lunch, usually in distinguished company, Mann can read the countless letters and essays about his work and personality that with few exceptions are laudatory at the highest pitch. His many public appearances

are, at least in his view, resoundingly successful; and there is the endless stream of visitors of distinction and family and local friends to entertain him at every single meal and tea. Add to this steady encouragement and recognition, he has the company of Niko, the poodle, to spell the gloom—Niko, whom, when Mann travels, he “longs to see . . . again,” “of whom I even dream about at night.” (T4 37).

And so, is the charge of monotony proof of Mann’s distinctively Faustian—read: insatiable—character (when, even in Brentwood, in Los Angeles, in the summer of 1940, following a dinner party with the Aldous Huxleys and “others,” he declared himself “exhausted for tedium”) (T4 122)? Or is his tedium proof of the underlying character of *Everyman*—in Walter Kaufmann’s phrase, his “ontological privation”?³⁹ Among his other acquaintances in California—not quite brilliant or vivid enough to curb his ennui for long—were Charles Boyer (whom he did like very much), Charles Laughton, Lotte Lehmann, Basil Rathbone, and Bruno Walter, among others. This is merely to skim the surface of the celebrities prepared to acknowledge Mann’s distinction. Frido Mann adds another ingredient to this mix: he was asked, “Wasn’t it his wife Katia and his daughter Erika through whom the *American way of life* first became attractive to him, right up to going to the movies?” Frido Mann replies: “Movie going was something, I think, inborn in him, like visits to the circus, which he liked very much. For that reason too, he wanted to get out of Princeton. Princeton was too boring for him, provincial and half-asleep.” There it is, a grandson’s view of Mann’s case, but I doubt that Frido’s gaze covers the full canvas.⁴⁰

On this topic of boredom, not to be dismissed lightly, Mann is himself a privileged commentator—as Martin Heidegger, for one, agreed;⁴¹ and Mann has a quite brilliant thing or two to say about the monotony he did indeed feel, once especially keenly, while struggling to untie a knot in the narration at the beginning of the fourth *Joseph* volume. It is a fine chip from the writer’s workbench. In a letter to his patroness—and plague—Agnes Meyer, he remarks,

I am worried about *Joseph*, who now presents me with artistic difficulties. Perhaps it would have been wiser to choose a vague, fabulous Pharaoh instead of Akhenaten, whose figure brings with it the danger of a historical, biographical heavy weighting of the book. The political and the religious aspects are not completely resolved when put into dialogue, scenic display, and indirection. Again, investigative, reportorial, and so to speak instructive interpolations are necessary; and as much as one tries to beware of dryness,

poetically it always remains a questionable, vulnerable thing. By the way, as for my scruples, perhaps simply exhaustion and a certain weariness with the old, preserved material are in play. If, however, I think of how Tolstoy got bored with *Anna Karenina*, I may say that my boredom does not necessarily prove that even the reader will be bored. It may even be useful as a compulsion to invent innovative stimulations (*Neuigkeitsreizen*). (BR.M 256)

Here, tedium might itself be a stimulant to the imagination: it is not clear whether that is the lot, at best, of the author or the reader. But boredom is not always so promising. In a letter some weeks later to “Mrs. Agnes,” Mann puts his weariness in a drearier light. How does the writer take his way through boredom to excitement? Recall Mann’s sense of the Dionysian excitement of writing when it has gripped him. Mann has returned to Princeton with a debilitating cold contracted in the “metropolis”—that is, New York City, where he had seen a liberating *Fidelio*—and has the feeling that he just ought to take to his bed. “Lately I’ve paid a little too much homage to the principle of ‘Despite everything!’ and from time to time I’m reminded of Goethe’s saying: ‘Unconditional activity in the end bankrupts you.’ *But how does one begin to be inactive?*”⁴² There is no likely interval available—for him!—in which to lodge and draw strength and newness.

Mann forever brooded on the looming disturbances to his routine, which is more than a routine: it is a *mythic* devotion to his writing. Distraction is an ongoing worry, not only in the form of his entire world-historical program of lectures and visits and meetings but, of course, by everyday material distractions. His struggle for his writing is worsened by the very imminent departure of the Manns for California, which means, now, in mid-March 1941, the physical tearing apart of their Princeton house. “It lies on my chest like a weight of stone, the homeless, confused weeks ahead, in which one must also hold one’s own at lectures and banquets, and the doubt in one’s heart whether what one is doing is right and reasonable” (BR.M 259).

But there is still another worry at work: his crushing sense of responsibility—to his art and to his country fighting for its democratic life—that tends to blind him to the suffering he might be inflicting on his family and friends. Precisely at the time of this correspondence, Agnes Meyer alerts him to the pain he can have caused to those especially devoted to him. Mann is moved to answer:

If I already make my friends suffer, what does it mean to be married to me! You have shaken my conscience in respect of my poor wife, who has had to put up with this for thirty-six years. Well, I have weighed down the earth for the longest time, and that's a good thing for me too, because, believe me, I am often thoroughly weary and look with liking to the time when only that portion of me will be there with which I tried to make people happy and "to help them live." (BR.M 259)

This question of *taedium vitae* to one side—in its manifold areas: poetics, hygiene, family, and the time on earth put in—Mann's decision to move to California was quasi-inevitable: it was already urgent some fifteen months after his arriving in Princeton. The impulse had mythic dimensions, having struck him on his very first visit to California in the spring of 1938. Speaking of California's Pacific coast, he wrote to Agnes Meyer of the "enchantments of this region": "A slight silliness [there] is outweighed by the hundredfold charm of nature and life. Whether we won't settle here one day?" (BR.M 153). California might be the permanent antidote to boredom and, more, be really entertaining (a delusion, as we have seen). "Future settlement plans, California, also the vicinity of Boston [*sic*], Hollywood, Santa Monica, strongly attract me for the climate, a more cheerful environment, [as a place] to write the fourth *Joseph*." Princeton had gotten on his nerves. "But the long-distance move, anything new at all, also scares me again" (T4 49). And so, it was Katia, his organizer, "the dragon at the gate," who—despite *her* grief at leaving Princeton, whose academic ambience suited her, and above all her friend and co-secretary Molly Shenstone—arranged the move.⁴³

True, it was under a serene and cheerful Californian sky—"so like that of Egypt"—that, two years after his permanent move, Mann would find the "lust and love" to finish the *Joseph* tetralogy.⁴⁴ It shone on his power of invention. One of the book's more engaging feats is *Joseph*'s economic policy, directly reminiscent of Roosevelt's New Deal. That is not surprising: the extent of Mann's fascination with Roosevelt has become a much-appreciated topic, especially in light of his several meetings with the president, the first on an earlier visit to the United States. On June 29, 1935, shortly after receiving an honorary degree from Harvard, he dined at the White House with the president and Mrs. Roosevelt.⁴⁵ Thereafter, he wrote to Kahler about "the very interesting dinner" he had had with them: "The meeting has greatly reinforced my bias in favor of this man" (EF 13). On a more casual note, Mann, the epicure, did take pains to comment in his diary on the dinner itself, which was rather poor.

Mann, let it be known, had a very lively relation to good food and drink: In his diaries the patrician can suddenly seem very human, *un homme* (even a bit more than) *moyen sensual*, as when he mentions dinner with Saul C. Colin, a film director, “in a kosher restaurant on Broadway, with excellent food, then a very funny Marx brothers’ film” (what an engaging set of pictures!) (T3 309). Or when he describes taking pleasure in an “uncommonly juicy and tasty dish of mutton with beer in jugs” in a dinner in a private room in a New York restaurant (very likely a privatissimum in the Lincoln Room at Kean’s Chop-house) before going to see Robert Sherwood’s *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (T3 352).⁴⁶ Then there is lunch with the “Rabbi” in Detroit “in a Russian restaurant: cabbage soup, vol-au-vent, and roast mutton” (probably lamb) and in the evening a “jam-omelet”—and yet he remained forever whippet-slim, an effect no doubt owed to his otherwise ascetic habits and continual smoking of cigarettes and cigars (T3 371).

Despite the mediocre dinner at the White House, Mann’s admiration of President Roosevelt never flagged. On November 1, 1940, he

listened to another, strongly socially focused election speech by Roosevelt, which was greeted with the strongest acclaim. His reelection is of paramount importance for the development of all things. The character of the era makes it unlikely. It would be [for me] the first political joy and satisfaction for seven and a half years. On the other hand, here for once the leader motif and the mass motif come together with the higher and spiritual interest—this could lead to satisfaction and beat Nazism. (T4 173)

Mann once again had the good fortune of staying at the White House on January 13 and 14, 1941.

Taken by his presence. Lively conversation. The main theme of his inauguration speech: the political-moral point of view before the economic. Story of Litvinov and God. Naivety, faith, cunning, acting, amiability. Considering the power and importance, it is very interesting to sit by his side. (T4 210–11)

His impressions of Roosevelt conveyed to Heinrich Mann two weeks later are vivid and incisive:

The most interesting episode on the trip I mentioned was a two-day stay at the White House—the three of us, including Erika. The president is decidedly a fascinating man, sunny in the face of his handicap, spoiled, cheerful, and clever, also something of an actor. Nevertheless, he is a man of

profound and unshakable convictions, the born counterpart to the European miscreant, whom he hates as much as we do. He suffered more than a little over not being able to make his views public sooner. To have done so would have put his reelection at risk, which, with complete justice, was his first consideration. (BR.H 243)

The high point of Mann's visit remained "a cocktail with the president in his office." During the entire period of his American exile, Mann felt quite free to send a telegram to Roosevelt to plead for fair treatment of the exile community, who were in danger, during the war, of being declared enemy aliens (L 389–90).⁴⁷ If Mann had not had a Czech passport and been treated as a German alien, he would not have been permitted to live on either coast. Mann's empirical attachment to Roosevelt was informed all along by his covert faith *only* in that form of democracy that was headed by a strong, charismatic leader, bound—it goes without saying—to humanistic values, to a belief in the rule of "spirit" (*Geist*).⁴⁸

Even during all Mann's travels in his years at Princeton—and despite the "difficulties" they caused him—Princeton was never far from his mind. In Omaha, Nebraska, on a walk with Katia at noon, noting the landscape, he was reminded, presumably happily, of Princeton (L 380). In Paris at the home of his friend the writer Annette Kolb, while champagne and coffee were served, he lounged on her sofa (paint the scene!), reading in the Basel *National-Zeitung* an article by a certain J.W. titled "Bei Thomas Mann in Princeton." Two days later, at the Dutch bathing resort of Noordwijk, he recorded his "agitation and depression at the loss of the key to his Princeton desk," which led to a brief tirade against "Zurich doctors" . . . and "all the rest": it was only after swallowing "the red capsule" that he could sleep (L 421–22). At this point he stresses the strenuous effort to adjust to the climate of the Dutch seashore following the aforementioned "difficulties of Princeton"—presumably *that* labor of climactic adjustment, both literal and symbolic of his transplantation from Europe—which had indeed translated itself into an outbreak of shingles! And as if that thought were unkind, for Princeton is also a place of safety and of one strong friendship, he sets about writing to Kahler, his "dear friend": "It is really time that our thoughts of you . . . were set on paper" (EF 23)—a "beginning" important enough for him to note in his diaries as an event and producing, the

next morning, a rare “relinquishing” of Mann’s task as an author, and his favorite beach chair, to finish the letter quite formally at his desk.

Mann attended to a high literary level in writing to Kahler: many of its sentences deserve citation as winged words, as, for example, the lines previously cited: “I have always appreciated the connection of the elemental and the comfortable” (EF 20). He teases Kahler about something Kahler had “on the tip of his tongue” to write about the great, difficult chapter 7 of *Lotte in Weimar*—Goethe’s monological stream-of-consciousness—asking Kahler . . . well, to say it. We will soon be exploring Kahler’s canny observation of the secret passageways in which Mann, writing as *Goethe*, had secreted small revelations about himself, “highly personal statements” (EF 29).⁴⁹ Mann’s game repeats Goethe’s own enjoyment in playing hide-and-seek with his identity.⁵⁰ But here we are again at the high point of Mann’s feelings for Princeton. In the days following his confession to his diary that “the future is very dark,” he declares, “It will be a good thing to follow—and await—the unforeseeable development of the war, its vicissitudes and terrors, in my Princeton library” (T₃ 472).

If I referred earlier to the abundance of trees in Princeton as the “elemental” factor, in Holland we have a factor evidently more powerful in Mann’s imagination: the sea. Mann’s feelings about oceans deserve a monograph; the pull of the waters helped bring him to California. He was explicit about one sort of feeling he harbored for the sea a half-century earlier in a great set piece in *Buddenbrooks*. Here, the older Thomas Buddenbrooks addresses his sister Tony while meditating on the kind of (modern) decadent—the artist-type—who, like Mann himself, prefers the ocean to the mountains:

What sort of people prefers the monotony of the sea . . . ? It seems to me it’s those who have gazed too long and too deeply into the complexity at the heart of things and so have no choice but to demand one thing from external reality: simplicity. It has little to do with boldly scrambling about in the mountains, as opposed to lying calmly beside the sea. But I know the look in the eyes of people who revere the one [the mountains] or the other [the sea]. Happy, confident, defiant eyes, full of enterprise, resolve, and courage scan from peak to peak; but when people dreamily watch the wide sea and the waves rolling in with mystical and numbing inevitability, there is something veiled, forlorn, and knowing about their eyes, as if at some point in life they have looked deep into gloomy chaos. Health or sickness—that is the difference. A man climbs jauntily up into the wonderful variety of jagged, towering, fissured forms to test his vital energies, because he has

never had to spend them. But a man chooses to rest beside the wide simplicity of external things, because he is weary from the chaos within.⁵¹

That is one sort of the seductiveness he felt coming from the sea—one of endless variations. In spring 1938, months before his move to Princeton, while staying at Caroline Newton's summerhouse in Jamestown, Rhode Island, he registered "the extraordinarily stimulating and exciting effect on the senses of the sea air," "an aphrodisiac, especially in damp weather" (H 1010).

On March 17, 1941, Mann left Princeton for Pacific Palisades—and the Pacific Ocean. The motive for his leaving Princeton was overdetermined—the reasons are confidently described in his diaries and letters. Foremost is the distraction of lecturing and teaching at the university, for which, at any rate, in 1941, funds were no longer available. And then there is the climate, the "continental" weather on the East Coast, with its freezing winters and humid summers. Bernard Berenson is said to have judged a permanent residence in New Jersey tolerable only on the condition that one be affluent enough to summer in Maine and winter in Florida. Such dislocations for Mann would have been out of the question. There were other reasons: the boredom of a circumscribed routine and a smallish social circle in a university town, to which now add on a possible motive less sublime and rarely mentioned by other biographers. On September 3, 1940, Mann writes in his diary that he has read a frightening article in *The Nation*,

written from the perspective of American military experts: extreme pessimism in the matter of England's situation and the threat to America, hopefully meant primarily as propaganda for the draft. The cessation of English resistance predicted for the end of this month.—The issue of a settlement is being much considered *here*. It seems reasonable because a quick turnaround for the good in Europe is not to be expected; in the best case, England will be on the defensive for a long time; war and uncertainty may go on for years. (T4 143; emphasis added)

Short text: if "here" is meant to include Princeton, just fifty miles from New York, it would be safer to live thousands of miles away from the East Coast and its proximity to German submarines and airplanes. Earlier that year, in the manifesto *The City of Man* that Mann helped to write, one could read: "Fore-runners of Nazi Germany, as early as forty-odd years ago, anticipating the great wars, had said already, 'Some months after we finish our work in Europe, we will take New York.' The Nazi conquerors today manifestly envision this

time.”⁵² On the other hand, buying a house on the Pacific Coast brings its own worries in tow: after receiving a disturbing letter from his brother Heinrich, Mann notes, on March 3, 1941, two weeks before his planned departure,

Shattering of the California resolutions, or at the least . . . doubt; half a mind to walk away from it. On the other hand, our stay here [in Princeton] has outlived its purpose. What disturbs me is the neighborhood there, settling permanently in such uncertain times, the thought of negative possibilities when conditions in the country become more parlous. (T4 227)

The thought that “conditions in the country” might well become more parlous was not strange to him. In a letter to Agnes Meyer, he wondered in 1940 about future “developments” in America: “I do *not* believe in this country—and have not for a long time. It is undermined, paralyzed, and ready for a fall like the rest of so-called civilization. It may not offer us security much longer” (H 1149).

Two years after Mann’s move to Pacific Palisades, Mann would plunge into his turbulent, self-involved, self-incriminating *Faustus* epic. It is no wonder that he often went to look at the ocean further north, above the city of Santa Monica. He would take long walks on the Ocean Boulevard promenade or be driven along it to a bluff overlooking the beach and the ocean. He loved to look at the waves, something he had loved to do ever since his childhood stays at Travemünde on the Baltic Sea.

But that is least of all the full horizon of Mann’s activity. For, every month, during his stay in California, until May 1945, with few interruptions, he was driven from his home to Hollywood for his political broadcasts—*Deutsche Hörer* (Listen, Germany!)—transmitted via the BBC to Germany (see in chapter 2, “Listen, Germany!” *infra*) (E 5:351). They are splendid, vigorous, courageous polemics, conveying Mann’s fury with dazzling virtuosity. They infuriated Goebbels, who, in his diaries, after hearing the first of Mann’s talks, jeered venomously at his “many political metamorphoses since 1914,” which was supposed to make Mann an unreliable commentator.⁵³ In fact, the frequency and incisiveness of Mann’s denunciations of the Third Reich do much to overpower the cultural memory of Mann’s early hesitations and later contradictions. It is true that in his first years in exile, Mann was undecided about what position to take toward the new Nazi regime. After all, the audience for his books and the guardian of his distinction was the good Germany, still possibly alive under

the barbaric hide of the New Order. Mann's son Golo wrote rather cruelly in his diary, "The old man wavers back and forth like a headless wasp."⁵⁴ Mann's wavering became the "*unerhörte Begebenheit*" ("the startling occurrence") of *The Decision*, a novel by the Dutch senator Britta Böhler, whose account has been criticized as insensitive to Mann's "towering complexity."⁵⁵ The book might have been called *The Agonizing Decision*; the choice was surpassingly difficult for Mann, even under the relentless pressure of his children.

During the years of his Princeton exile, Mann's polemical writings turned consistently on a set of moral and political themes.⁵⁶ Authentic Germany, the genius of German literature, is to be found where its guardian dwells—Thomas Mann—and never mind on which continent. At the same time, this treasure—and burden—cannot erase the sorrow of exile from one's country, which meant, for Mann, the loss of home, wealth, friends, readership, and more. His predicament leads us back to its source: the vicious inhumanity of a fascist regime forever bent on war. Until December 1941, Mann had needed to tell the world of what was in store for it, and now this terrible promise is alive. The "world" that needed to be told included Germany proper: the first of the sixty-one speeches to *Deutsche Hörer*, composed shortly before Christmas in late 1940, warned the Germans that their misguided loyalty to a barbarous regime would cost them dearly at the end—an end whose horror one could barely imagine. It is unlikely that these speeches had the desired effect of inducing listeners to "rise up," to "revolt." But Mann was tireless and prolific in issuing one vivid, outraged assault after another, stressing again and again the unmoveable "opposition of the cultural totality of humanity to the political totalitarianism of the State."⁵⁷

Many of Mann's tirades were dropped as leaflets over Germany by the RAF and the US Air Force. No other exiled German author engaged in so persistent and forceful a propaganda attack against Hitler's regime, although it was Mann's singularly lofty prestige in both Britain and America (considering his Nobel Prize and numerous honorary doctorates) that gave him that opportunity. At the same time, he never stopped making bold use of it. He would also have enjoyed the free play of his rhetorical gifts it offered him: in the manner of a schoolmaster, congenial to him, he could convey facts concealed by the Nazis, and he could also unfurl a furious satire against that "menagerie" of Nazi rulers—Goebbels the liar and Goering the fat.

In many of his writings during his first years in America—but not in the radio addresses—he attempted to distinguish between Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism to the slight credit of the latter. But his sympathy for a genuine

socialism, which he could not entirely detach from the ruling clique of the Soviet Union, would cause him immense trouble in the years after Princeton. He imagined—articulately—a social democracy somehow not at odds with individual freedom, but it was beyond his abilities to advance a plan to realize this ideal. Germany had never experienced a popular revolution, and so no one could judge its possible efficacy. The core of German intelligence had, in the modern period, been sequestered in culture, inwardness, romantic yearning, myth, untouched by something like a canny social-political pragmatism bent on realizing a free, equitable, and just society. This “spirit” (*Geist*), which Mann attaches, exemplarily, but certainly problematically, to the German “bourgeoisie” of the nineteenth century, was powerless to resist the “botching” (*Verhunzung*—literally, “the going to the dogs”) of these very qualities in a fascist political mythology. Running through these tensions between an inner and an outer world was a deep and long-standing conflict at the heart of the country’s history: never an organically developing nation, Germany obtained its unity, following Mann, at the price of its internal liberty. Along with this felt deprivation, it was quick to develop an aggravated sense of how the freedom of the individual might be constrained in a society posited on the equality of its members—an opposition Mann cast directly as that between “democracy” and “socialism.” So, how could a *democratic socialism* be imagined taking root in this rift? And yet, side by side with the fierce “militarism” of Mann’s opposition to the Nazis, he conjures “a fundamental ethics, a ‘socialistic’ political theory, although one rather vague, illusory, and impossible to realize.”⁵⁸

In the years following the end of the war, Mann no longer commanded the media of radio broadcasts or an increasingly irreproachable political dossier. In a country now driven by paranoid suspicions of sabotage, he was at the mercy of the media, just as in our own days: “the cynicism of power once again dictates the values at large; whoever controls the media-driven public world is in the right; and foreignness presents itself as a threat.”⁵⁹ In 1952, under the threat of investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee, as we now know, Mann left America for good, for Erlenbach and thereafter to Kilchberg near Zurich. He died, three years later, in 1955, at the age of eighty, just three months after the death of his Princeton neighbor and occasional friend Albert Einstein. The third great antifascist exile in America, Arturo Toscanini, died a little more than a year later. What a loss in human distinction there was!

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