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Censorship and Exile

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Preface

In an increasingly globalized world that is interconnected through new technologies of communication and in which the power over information and discourses is continuously growing in importance, liberties such as artistic freedom and freedom of speech need to be negotiated and defended time and again. In order to gain power over discourses, censorship as the institutionalized control of free speech, be it fictional, non-fictional, verbal or visual and – in an extreme form – the destruction and burning of books have been used to suppress ideas that stand in opposition to dominant ideologies and discourses. Censorship therefore starkly contradicts a pluralistic and democratically structured cultural life within a given society. The burning of books constitutes a defamatory form of censorship which is not merely a phenomenon of the last century but one that has existed since antiquity and is still practiced today. Book burnings are public and ceremonial manifestations of censorship that are supposed to have a cleansing effect insofar as that a society is symbolically freed from non-conformist ideas. In 1933, at the beginning of the National Socialist regime, book burnings were used as a means of defaming oppositional forces and establishing a National Socialist canon of works.

In the phenomenon of censorship the intersection and reciprocal tensions of the cultural and political spheres become drastically apparent. Literature as a form of cultural expression reacts to and criticizes ideological premises of certain political contexts. It thus represents a counter-discourse to processes of canonization that are prescribed and violently put into action by oppressive political regimes. Censorship has the function of exerting power by suppressing potentially destabilizing ideas. Yet, forms of censorship paradoxically reveal the self-consciousness and weaknesses of the censoring institutions. Censorship or book burnings are not aimed at books per se but at certain ideas expressed in writing. The potential power of these ideas is affirmed and acknowledged through the act of destroying their material manifestations.

During the last century, in Germany but also in the U.S., censorship – also in the form of book burnings – was organized and carried out. Within the re-

spective political contexts, people who demanded liberties such as freedom of speech or artistic freedom often found themselves forced into exile or emigrated internally. Censorship and the burning of books in this respect constitutes – in a metonymic relationship – a threat to the authors' or artists' physical and mental integrity on grounds of their race, religious affiliation, political views or sexual identity. Authors who had to seek refuge in other countries collectively shared traumatizing experiences of exile, political, religious or racist persecution, alienation, loss, the deterioration of their living standards as well as restricted possibilities of publication. However, exile literature is also highly heterogeneous when it comes to how authors responded to and processed their experiences. This heterogeneity constitutes a challenge to “exile literature” as a field of research characterized by various continuities and discontinuities. The present volume focuses on exactly these continuities and discontinuities, on commonly shared features as well as the heterogeneous manifestations of exile literature(s) in the face of practices of censorship and the repression of free speech and artistic freedom in Germany, the U.S., and beyond.

Even though censorship and exile have acquired special significance since the twentieth century in particular they are not only a phenomenon of modernity but rather go back a long time in literary, cultural, and political history, as the essays in the present volume amply demonstrate. Indeed one could argue that from the very beginnings of literary culture, the role and function of literature in society has been intimately tied up with questions of censorship and exile. In the first important document of literary theory in Plato's philosophy, it is precisely this connection between literature, censorship and exile, which is already uncannily present in the ways in which the strangely troubled relationship between literature and the state is characterized. Literature, according to Plato, is a powerful but potentially uncontrollable imaginative force in culture, which transgresses rational norms of the *logos* and ethics that are necessary to maintain the order and stability of his ideal state. Poets are therefore confronted by the state with two choices, either censorship and supervised self-correction of their writings according to the expectations of the authorities, or exile. Censorship and exile are thus already implied in this concept of literature as a deeply problematic and institutionally incommensurable form of cultural activity and communication.

Even though in Plato such ideas were still embedded in the rather benevolent context of his philosophical republic, they already foreshadow later, more severe and not at all benevolent forms of censorship and enforced exile, which have recurred throughout history and which have escalated in the conflict between literature and the totalitarian systems of the twentieth century. In other words, the issues raised in this volume are not merely concerned with a number of exceptional cases or crises in literary history, but instead relate to a fundamental

condition of literature and its functions within society. Rather, censorship and exile have been present throughout history in different religious and socio-political contexts, even though they have reached an extreme form in the modern period, as illustrated most infamously in the Nazi book burnings. However, censorship has also occurred in other totalitarian states and, even though in much milder forms, in democratic cultures as well.

These practices of censorship have often led to the silencing of authors and to the end of their literary productivity, if not to the destruction of their personal existence or even their lives. At the same time, however, institutional attempts to control and suppress the literary mind have also – time and again – supplied a source of stupendous literary productivity. This may at least in part be due to the fact that one important function of literary texts lies precisely in the ways in which they transform the culturally suppressed into a source of their creative energy. Literature in this sense is a cultural form which has a special sensorium for the exclusions of dominant social and political systems, which it stages as the symbolic material of its imaginative counter-discourses. Literary texts are thus always already in a symbolic, if not a real, exile from all closed systems of order and ideology. What this also means, among other things, is that literature is never a merely ethnocentric and national form, but that it is always already transnational and intercultural in orientation. It is fascinating to see how this tension between normative control and literary creativity plays itself out in many different ways and historical contexts in the essays of this volume.

In the attempt to indicate different ways of dealing with this highly diverse and complex topic, the essays are ordered around four perspectives focusing on comparative, creative, historical, and political dimensions of the topic. Of course, these perspectives overlap and demarcate areas of multiple interacting factors rather than entirely distinct approaches to the practice of censorship and exile in literature and culture. Taken together, they may help to illuminate a characteristic field of tensions between sociopolitical structures of control and the forms of cultural freedom and creativity which these structures try to expurgate, but which gain their own unpredictable dynamics, more often than not, from those very attempts at their enforced suppression.

The volume is the result of a research cooperation which has been established between the University of Augsburg and the University of Texas at Austin. The cooperation was instituted on the initiative of the English and American Studies departments of both universities, notably Prof. Heide Ziegler from the University Council of the University of Augsburg and Prof. Elizabeth Cullingford, Chair of the English Department at the University of Texas at Austin. The commonly shared interest of both institutions in literatures of exile, as manifested in the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin and the Salzman Library of Burned Books in the Augsburg University Library, provided

the core idea for a three-day conference held at the University of Augsburg from May 23 – 25, 2013, in which faculty members from both universities participated and from which this volume has originated. The conference was supported, both ideally and materially, by the University President Prof. Sabine Doering-Man-teuffel and the Vice President for international relations, Prof. Axel Tuma. It took place in cooperation with the Ethics of Textual Cultures Graduate Program within the Elite Network of Bavaria, with the Augsburg University Library, as well as with the Jakob-Fugger-Zentrum – Research Center for Transnational Studies at the University of Augsburg, which was established recently to promote innovative research across disciplines and national boundaries. The special importance of the present volume, and of the international and interdisciplinary cooperation that it reflects, is underlined by the fact that this is the first book to be published in the newly launched book series of the Fugger Center at V&R unipress.

We would like to thank all persons and institutions who have made the conference and the publication of this volume possible due to the generous financial, administrative, and academic support from both universities. We would also like to thank our graduate assistants Ayse Göker, Benedikt Kindler and Elisabeth Schmitt for their help in the organization of the conference and Beate Greisel for her invaluable work in the preparation of the manuscript for print.

January 2015

Johanna Hartmann and Hubert Zapf

I. Censorship and Exile in Comparative Perspective

Heide Ziegler (Stuttgart)

Exile and Self-Censorship: Thomas Mann and Vladimir Nabokov

At the beginning of Canto Four of his poem “Pale Fire,” Nabokov’s poet John Shade exclaims that “Now I shall try what none / Has tried. Now I shall do what none has done” (lines 837 – 838), only to suggest that there are, quite simply, two ways of composing, one that goes on solely in the writer’s mind and another that consists in putting his thoughts down on paper. I have a similar hunch about the discrepancies inherent in my endeavors on the present occasion. Any attempt to say something new and interesting about two novels as well-known and as heavily researched as Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* (1947) and Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* (1962) might appear improperly presumptuous. As early as the 1960s, when *Pale Fire* was being published, the lament had already arisen that the critical literature dealing with *Doktor Faustus* was assuming altogether vast proportions. And after Nabokov’s novel *Lolita*, which Putnam had brought out belatedly in America in 1958, had climbed to the top of the bestseller list, eventually selling fifty million copies, no further novel written by Nabokov could go unnoticed either. Indeed, in *Pale Fire*, Nabokov himself slyly refers to the veritable storms *Lolita* created, not only in the United States, but in England, Italy, and in France, where it was banned on three separate occasions. He has Shade tell us, in line 679 of his eponymous poem, that “It was a year of Tempests: Hurricane / Lolita swept from Florida to Maine” (lines 679 – 680).¹

And there is an additional reason why it might at least appear inopportune to attempt to *compare* the novels *Doktor Faustus* and *Pale Fire*: apart from the well-known facts that both Thomas Mann and Vladimir Nabokov were famous and very influential modernist writers, that both were exiles who had been forced to flee oppressive political systems, one communist, the other fascist, and that both had moved to the United States and become American citizens, Mann and Nabokov do not seem to have much in common. Indeed Nabokov, in more than

1 See also Nabokov, *Ada or Ardor* 12, where Demon is reported to phone his lover Marina from his “aunt’s ranch near Lolita, Texas,” a small village in Texas that has the advantage of existing in historical time and place. This time, an emotional storm ensues.

one instance, indulges in serious Thomas Mann-bashing, probably most famously in his 1957 postscript to *Lolita* called, “On a Book Entitled *Lolita*”:

For me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss. [...] There are not many such books. All the rest is either topical trash or what some call the Literature of Ideas, which very often is topical trash coming in huge blocks of plaster that are carefully transmitted from age to age until somebody comes along with a hammer and takes a good crack at Balzac, at Gorki, at Mann.²

Nabokov’s furious indictment induces a final caveat against a comparison of the novels *Doktor Faustus* and *Pale Fire*. I am convinced that neither Thomas Mann nor Vladimir Nabokov would have appreciated my take on their novels. Yet for the time being I am nevertheless asking for a willing suspension of your disbelief while I disregard both the aloofness of Mann and Nabokov’s actual dislike of Thomas Mann as a novelist to invite precisely such a comparison between the two writers – even daring to ask whether the exile of great writers does not inevitably lead to similar forms of severe self-censorship, an attitude that not only influences their choice of subject, but also their style, and thus ultimately reflects their very personality. I believe that it is possible to demonstrate that both Mann’s and Nabokov’s struggle to overcome this implicit form of self-censorship in the end actually enhances the undeniable impact both novels still have on the reader.

In attempting such a comparison between Mann and Nabokov, the novels *Doktor Faustus* and *Pale Fire* seem to be obvious choices, for a number of reasons. In each of the two novels the reader must listen to two very different, if complementary, voices, the voice of an artist – a composer in the case of Mann, a poet in that of Nabokov – and the voice of another person who is emotionally attached to that artist and who feels that he is under the obligation to explain the former’s work to future generations. These “secondary” spokesmen not only feel the emotional urge to interpret what they consider the work of genius, but also how and why they partook in it. But the innermost impulses that drive the narrator Serenus Zeitblom to write a biography of his friend, the eminent composer Adrian Leverkühn, and that of Charles Kinbote, the commentator of John Shade’s famous poem “Pale Fire,”³ are very different. Zeitblom loves and

2 Nabokov, *Lolita* 333. For a more refined version of the same sentiment see Ross Wetzsteon, “Nabokov as Teacher,” in: *Nabokov: Criticism, Reminiscences, Translations and Tributes*. Eds. Alfred Appel, Jr. and Charles Newman. Evanston 1970, 240–246, 243: “Poshlost? [...] a peculiarly Russian word, [...] a kind of subtle vulgarity, not crude or coarse, but verging on sensitivity, sensitivity with a slight tinge of mold – Olivier’s *Hamlet*, for instance, with its ‘Freudian staircases,’ or ‘the great ideas,’ or the novels of Thomas Mann.”

3 In *Ada or Ardor*, Ada and Van see fit to spend time late in their lives “reworking their translation of a passage [...] in John Shade’s famous poem” (458), and the “famous” poet of *Pale Fire* is also quoted on page 425 of the same novel: “Space is a swarming in the eyes, and

admires his friend Adrian, whom he has known since they were children, and whose career has been his main concern throughout his life, even to the point of self-abnegation. Zeitblom humbly wants to serve his friend, and to make that exalted, but doomed genius known and accepted by posterity. Kinbote, on the other hand, is far more interested in himself than in Shade, whom he has vainly attempted to seduce into writing a poem about *him*, the – imaginary? – former Charles II, beloved king of a lost kingdom, called Zembla, somewhere in the far north of Europe.

But the self-proclaimed attitudes of Zeitblom and Kinbote can easily mislead the reader. Zeitblom as a narrator has often been criticized as being too pedantic, too long-winded, too self-effacing.⁴ But Zeitblom as Leverkühn's biographer is indispensable to the reader, mainly for an understanding of Leverkühn's musical compositions, since those compositions are completely contained within the confines of the novel called *Doktor Faustus*; in other words, they are fictional and have never been heard nor will they ever be heard outside the world of the novel. For their consideration and appreciation, we have to rely on Zeitblom's words. Thus, the reader can easily become confused, even irritated: How does this decisive role as commentator square with Zeitblom's professed humility before Adrian's genius? Or, how can any consensus among readers about the genius of Leverkühn be achieved if we only have Zeitblom's words for it? Let me contend that at this point the author himself tacitly steps into the text to take control. First, he makes us realize that Zeitblom knows much about music: Serenus plays the Viola d'amore (a telling name when one considers his relationship to Adrian), and in the long run he is shown to be more than apt to understand, explain, and interpret Adrian's compositions. For Zeitblom does not just describe to us the compositions of his friend! He also knows how to fascinate the reader, for instance, when he describes the lectures that Adrian's later music teacher Wendell Kretzschmar delivers before a tiny audience in Kaisersaschern, a small medieval town where Adrian and Serenus attend high school. His famous rendering of Kretzschmar's lecture on Beethoven's piano sonata opus 111, for instance, when he feelingly describes Kretzschmar's verbal, or rather sublimely verbose, accompaniment of his performance of the sonata on the piano, shows

Time a singing in the ears,' says John Shade, a modern poet, as quoted by an invented philosopher ('Martin Gardiner') in *The Ambidextrous Universe* 165."

⁴ See for instance Käte Hamburger's review of *Doktor Faustus* in *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* on November 27, 1947 (Wörtlich ins Deutsche übersetzte Wiedergabe): "Dass ein Erzähler, und einer von dieser Art, in den Roman eingeschaltet ist, hat, wie wir sehen werden, seinen guten Grund. Aber man kann nicht umhin, sich zu wundern, dass der grosse Menschengestalter und Erzähler Thomas Mann sich diesmal einer solchen Darstellungsform bedient hat. Denn man muss zugeben, dass Serenus Zeitblom ein etwas langweiliger Herr (und auch als solcher gemeint) ist" (Brunträger 134).

empathy and understanding, not only for Kretzschmar, while the pianist either stutters or shouts as he plays along, but even more for Ludwig van Beethoven. Thomas Mann had the help of Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno for the writing of Kretzschmar's and Zeitblom's interpretation of Beethoven's sonata. In 1943, when he began to write *Doktor Faustus*, Mann had made the acquaintance of Adorno, an exiled émigré to California like himself. Adorno was then in the process of writing his *Philosophie der neuen Musik* [*Philosophy of New Music*], and Mann knew how to make good use of his new friend.⁵ Yet Mann not only brings Adorno's insights to Kretzschmar's interpretation of Beethoven, but he has young Serenus Zeitblom bring those insights to the reader in a truly convincing fashion. Thus, we are gradually made to lose all doubt that Adrian's friend is capable of understanding the composer's genius, despite – or even because – of Zeitblom's modesty. A second supporting piece of evidence of Zeitblom's musical connoisseurship that is adduced by the author himself consists in the fact, strangely enough, that the third (1948 Suhrkamp) edition of *Doktor Faustus* contains a postscript by Thomas Mann, confirming the influence of yet another German exile in California on *Doktor Faustus*: the composer Arnold Schönberg's technique of composition on Leverkühn's innovative music – again lucidly explained by Serenus Zeitblom. Schönberg, who was Mann's neighbor in Pacific Palisades, was seriously disgruntled by what he considered Mann's plagiarism. It is well known that Katia, Thomas Mann's wife, believed Mann's postscript to be unnecessary (after all, all great artists steal, only lesser artists imitate), but I am convinced that Mann was secretly pleased by Schönberg's outrage and did not mind adding the postscript. Frankly, it made Schönberg ultimately appear rather petty, but – much more importantly – it revealed to the reader that Mann had created an awesome protagonist, awesomely celebrated by Mann's narrator.

If Zeitblom thus turns out to be much more important in his role as biographer of Adrian Leverkühn, but perhaps also of a whole age, than the reader would at first suspect, the reader also does well to reconsider the brash and self-assertive attitude of Kinbote, professor of Russian at New Wye College and commentator of John Shade's poem, before he dismisses him on account of his

5 Mann himself tells us in his 1949 novel *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus* 42: "Hier war in der Tat etwas 'Wichtiges.' Ich fand eine artistisch-soziologische Situationskritik von größter Fortgeschrittenheit, Feinheit und Tiefe, welche die eigentümlichste Affinität zur Idee meines Werkes, zu der 'Komposition' hatte, in der ich lebte, an der ich webte. In mir entschied es sich: 'Das ist mein Mann.'" Cf. Mann, *The Story of a Novel* 42: "Here indeed was something important. The manuscript dealt with modern music both on an artistic and on a sociological plane. The spirit of it was remarkably forward-looking, subtle and deep, and the whole thing had the strangest affinity to the idea of my book, to the 'composition' in which I lived and moved and had my being. The decision was made of itself: this was my man."

unappealing character. Kinbote calls himself John Shade's friend, but this "friendship" is not mutual; it means that Kinbote attempts to make use of the poet, since – as he freely admits – he does not know how to write a poem himself. He does not plagiarize, in fact, he does the very opposite: he attempts to intrude into Shade's poem and, with the help of his notes, create a dramatic subtext to that poem, in order to immortalize his own – imaginary? – adventures as Charles II, King of Zembla – a subject he had constantly been pressing on Shade during their relationship, but which Shade has conspicuously chosen to ignore. The question arises, however, whether Shade's efforts to evade Kinbote's influence were altogether successful. For in lines 923–940 of his poem Shade does implicitly acknowledge – by almost savagely criticizing – Kinbote's unrelenting pressure on him, projecting his criticism of his neighbor on everything that to him appears noisy, swaggering, boastful, indiscreet, unsophisticated:

Now I shall speak of evil as none has / Spoken before. I loathe such things as jazz; / The hosed moron torturing a black / Bull, rayed with red; abstractist bric-a-brac; / Primitive folk-masks; progressive schools; / Music in supermarkets; swimming pools; / Brutes, bores, class-conscious Philistines, Freud, Marx, / Fake thinkers, puffed-up poets, frauds and sharks./ And while the safety blade with scrape and scream / Travels across the country of my cheek, / Cars on the highway pass, and up the steep / Incline big trucks around my jawbone creep, / and now a silent liner docks, and now / Sunglassers tour Beirut, and now I plough / Old Zembla's fields where my gray stubble grows, / And slaves make hay between my mouth and nose. / *Man's life as commentary to abstruse / Unfinished poem.* Note for further use.

Nabokov's *Pale Fire* differs from Mann's *Doktor Faustus* insofar as it actually contains Shade's eponymous poem, 999 lines of the intended 1,000 lines, whereas Mann's novel does not include the scores of Adrian's compositions. The reader can read Shade's poem and judge its merits for herself; and whatever else the reader may think of the poem, it thus becomes evident that Shade is not a "puffed-up poet." If anything, he is too modest, too homely, and too withdrawn.⁶ Yet he seems to foresee, in almost uncanny fashion, that Kinbote will become the "puffed-up" editor and commentator of his poem "Pale Fire," the manuscript of which Kinbote will wrestle almost by force from his widow Sybil, and that he, Shade, needs to subdue Kinbote beforehand and bring him low within the confines of his own poem. Shade therefore decides that his, the poet's, life must

6 See Boyd, "'Pale Fire': Poem and Pattern," in: *Stalking Nabokov* 341: "If the texture of 'Pale Fire' seems less rich than we might expect in view of the density of twentieth-century poetry and of Shade's 'not text, but texture' motto, that is only because of Shade's and his master's mastery of the psychology of attention as well as the aesthetics of invention. They offer us immediately explicit sense and overt patterns while concealing for later discovery – further delayed by the distractions of the commentary – covert patterns and more poignant implications."

in the end become a commentary on his own poem, thus preempting all other potential autobiographical commentaries. He wants his poem to become a text that cannot be used by Kinbote, that will offer resistance to being stolen after his death. This is an almost impossible feat, and Shade (as well as his author) does of course know it. Otherwise he would not – as a cautionary measure – have called his poem “Pale Fire,” and his author would not have called the novel as such *Pale Fire*; for both allude to the moon who steals her pale fire from the sun or, in intertextual terms, they both steal their title from Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens*. Still, Shade tries his best by foregoing any attempt at resembling the Bard. Utterly trivializing Kinbote’s presumptuous flights of fancy, the poet turns the stubbly fields of Zembla, Kinbote’s imaginary kingdom, into the stubbles of his own unshaven skin, which he then removes with his safety blade.⁷ He also declares his intention to ultimately turn “Pale Fire,” the text he knows Kinbote will want to pounce upon, into an “abstruse unfinished poem.” With regard to both the content and the form of his poem, he thus attempts to resist Kinbote’s invasive thrusts before the fact.

The renowned Nabokov critic Brian Boyd believes that Shade’s dead daughter Hazel may be influencing the poem of her father from the beyond, because he will be shot before he can complete its last line and thus must leave the poem unfinished. But certainly the poet, while still alive and writing his poem, need not foresee that it will be left unfinished by fate or by accident, and the final lines of the poem contradict any such notion. For Shade states shortly before the end of the poem that

I am reasonably sure that I
Shall wake at six tomorrow, on July
The twenty-second, nineteen fifty-nine,
And that the day will probably be fine. (lines 979–982)

Thus, the poet clearly does not foresee that he will be shot before the day ends; he also tells the reader that he is now going to set his alarm clock for the next morning and put Shade’s “Poems” back on their shelf. In other words, although the poem seems to be not quite finished at this point, and although Shade does indeed add another fifteen lines to it before he puts the text back on the shelf, it seems obvious to me that Shade *intends* to leave his poem “unfinished,” that it is, in fact, *finished* when he shelves it; and this idea is corroborated when we consider that only *one line*, line 1,000, is still missing, after 999 lines of the poem have been completed, and that line 999 ends on the word “lane,” which rhymes

⁷ In the Index Kinbote notes under “Kinbote, Charles, Dr., an intimate friend of S,” that an earlier line of the poem reminds him of “his [Kinbote’s] penetrating into the bathroom where his friend sat and shaved in the tub.” See Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 310. Hereafter abbreviated as PF.

with the last word of the first line of the poem, “slain.” We have come full circle, and the poem is complete; it is formally unassailable. This must be intentional.

The reader knows, of course, that Kinbote will not be deterred by the poet’s masterstroke. And the reason seems to be that as an exile, and a most self-assured, obnoxious exile to boot, he simply dares to intrude into another culture and, in his Foreword, Commentary, Index, foist his own ideas on a poem that intrinsically resists such an accretion. Kinbote has to pay a price for such impermissible behavior, of course, by gradually losing whatever sympathies the reader might have had for him initially. Still, we have seen that when Shade attempts to bring the intruder low within his own poem, Kinbote indirectly nevertheless manages to bring out the worst in the gentle poet, prejudices that, in an American, really seem to be abstruse. We know, for instance, that Nabokov loathed both Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx, and sharing these deep-rooted sentiments with his author would not necessarily detract from the poet’s dignity. But his loathing of jazz, progressive schools, swimming pools? It seems as if a fastidious, émigré Nabokov himself were speaking here, who consciously transgresses the boundaries between his protagonist’s life and his own – just as Thomas Mann did in a different fashion in *Doktor Faustus*.

And just like Thomas Mann, Vladimir Nabokov also seems to offer some direct authorial support to the claims of his narrative helpmate. In Chapter Three of his autobiography, *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov conveys this important piece of information to the reader:

[M]y great-grandfather Nikolay Aleksandrovich Nabokov, was a young naval officer in 1817, when he participated, with the future admirals Baron von Wrangel and Count Litke, under the leadership of Captain (later Vice-Admiral) Vadilij Mihaylovich Golovnin, in an expedition to map Nova Zembla (of all places) where “Nabokov’s River” is named after my ancestor.⁸

Charles Kinbote’s demand of John Shade to write a poem about *his* life instead of the poet’s own may therefore not be quite as preposterous as it appears at first sight, coming as it ultimately does from the pen of Vladimir Nabokov, who has a real-life connection to Nova Zembla. Although most literary critics locate Kinbote’s imaginary Zembla somewhere in the high north of Scandinavia, because Charles II claims that his native tongue is Zemblan, not Russian, whereas Nova Zembla is part of Russia, the fact remains that Kinbote’s Zembla has – at least

⁸ Nabokov: *Speak, Memory* 52. Chapter Three was first published in 1948 and can, therefore, definitely be considered as a source for *Pale Fire*. Interestingly, the American college town where the novel is set is called *New Wye*, and can thus be related to *Nova Zembla*; and since Hazel Shade is said to have attempted to cross the lake “from Exe to Wye” (line 490) before she drowned, this may also be an indirect reference to Zembla, since the alphabet proceeds from X (Exe) to Y (Wye) to Z (Zembla).

linguistically – some root in geographical reality, and that Nabokov has taken great pains to spell out the details of his great-grandfather's historical expedition as accurately as possible. The vicinity of Russia to Zembla is, moreover, often alluded to in Kinbote's notes, and the fate of the two countries after the expulsion of their monarchs is seen to be similar. Kinbote calls it a gloomy doom which "is merely the outward sign of congested nationalism and a provincial's sense of inferiority – that dreadful blend so typical of Zemblans under the Extremist rule and of Russians under the Soviet regime" (PF 243). In other words, the Zembla Kinbote has fled is like a *former* Russia, and Kinbote and Nabokov share the insight into a similar political development of their former homelands.

There are, in addition, a couple of parallels between the lives of Charles Kinbote and his author which spell some possible sympathies between them. Not only are both Kinbote and Nabokov exiles, and not only have both fled under dramatic circumstances from extremist régimes; they also have both lived on the Côte d'Azur. Assassins play a decisive role in their lives: Shade is shot through the heart on July 21, 1959, by someone who, as Kinbote wants to make us believe, is a potential assassin come for himself. Nabokov's father's birthday was July 21, and Nabokov senior was shot through the heart by a gunman aiming to assassinate someone else, in Berlin in 1922. Both Nabokov and Kinbote have emigrated to the United States and become professors at American universities, Nabokov at Cornell in Ithaca and Kinbote at Wordsmith in New Wye, the latter being stylized versions of Cornell University and Ithaca.⁹ And shortly before he wrote *Pale Fire*, Nabokov had finished his translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* into English and added an extensive *commentary* to this famous poem.

However, Kinbote comes across as a narcissistic, extremely unpleasant pedophile, a homosexual maniac and a misogynist. As a character, John Shade would appear to be the more plausible *alter ego* of Nabokov himself: happily married, the loving father of an only child, and a well-known, if rather traditional, poet, who has written a book on Alexander Pope, composes his poem in heroic couplets, and tends to be compared to Robert Frost. Nabokov had written poetry in Russian before he began to write fiction, and like Shade, the writer Nabokov held a university job, teaching literature. Also, Shade's name is telling, and the reader encounters him first through the image of a "shadow," an image that Shade himself compellingly evokes in the first two lines of his poem "Pale Fire": "I was the shadow of the waxwing slain / By the false azure in the windowpane." In a sense, therefore, Shade sees himself as a living shadow, a fiction, who continues to write poetry after the "real thing" has accidentally killed itself by assuming that the reflected azure of the windowpane was that of

⁹ For an extensive account of the real-life sources of Wordsmith University, New Wye, Zembla and Charles II, see Boyd, *Nabokov's Pale Fire* 79–82.

the sky. But interestingly, the group of extremists that seems to stalk Charles II with the intention of assassinating him are also called “Shadows.” One could argue that Kinbote has of course read Shade’s poem by the time he writes his commentary and could therefore have invented the name, making proper use of the poet’s metaphor. It seems more likely, however, that we are dealing with yet another indirect ironic commentary by the author himself, since Kinbote would not consciously evoke an image that calls forth the association of himself stalking Shade, like the Shadows seem to be stalking him. Thus, unlikely as it may seem, the question does arise whether or not – through the intervention of the author himself – a hidden identity can be stated for the novel’s two main protagonists.

The question whether the two main characters in each novel, Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*, and Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*, are ultimately identical (and also identical with the author) is an important one in our case, because such an identity would give rise to the thesis that both authors, feeling insecure in their adopted countries because of their position as exiles, would tend to create an artist who calls up his own “internalized” censor, thus producing a form of – positive or negative – self-censorship. The question can be more conclusively answered in the case of *Doktor Faustus*. In *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus: Roman eines Romans [The Story of a Novel: The Genesis of “Doctor Faustus”]*, Thomas Mann tells us how once, while reading from his novel-in-progress, he was asked if there was a real-life model for Adrian Leverkühn. Mann evaded the issue by answering that “Leverkühn sei sozusagen eine Idealgestalt, ein ‘Held unserer Zeit,’ ein Mensch, der das Leid der Epoche trägt.”¹⁰ He goes on to reflect that Serenus Zeitblom, for obvious reasons, cannot be described in physical terms either:

Romanfiguren im pittoresken Sinn durften nur die dem Zentrum fernerer Erscheinungen des Buches [...] sein – nicht seine beiden Protagonisten, die zu viel zu verbergen haben, nämlich das Geheimnis ihrer Identität.¹¹

And, we can add, the secret of their being identical with their author. For although both Leverkühn and Zeitblom are obviously Mann’s fictional creations, they somehow seem to be evocations rather than characters, especially Adrian, since he is made to bear the burden of a whole disintegrating culture, the German culture at the end of the Third Reich, its rich literary and musical history. This is why Mann wants us to see Leverkühn, in Michail Lermontov’s telling phrase, as

10 Mann, *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus* 81. Cf. Mann, *The Story of a Novel* 88: “[Leverkühn was] a kind of ideal figure, a ‘hero of our time,’ a person who bore the suffering of the epoch.”

11 Mann, *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus* 82. See *The Story of a Novel* 89–90: “Only the characters more remote from the center of the book could be novelistic figures in the picturesque sense – ... But not the two protagonists, who had too much to conceal, namely, the secret of their being identical with each other.”

“a hero of our time,” as a person who bears the burden of the demise of a whole epoch.¹² We need to understand that although Adrian Leverkühn, Mann’s Doctor Faustus who enters a pact with the Devil, partakes in the Devil’s astonishing insights, power, and range of thought, his creative urges, the almost superhuman struggle necessary to achieve a breakthrough in modern music and all the concomitant sufferings are *his* alone. Thus, Adrian Leverkühn is an exile among humanity *par excellence*, twice removed from “normal” human beings because of his pact with the Devil, and the exiled Thomas Mann feels deeply with him, especially since he shares his range of creativity. And to the degree that the author shares this creativity in the face of damnation, in this case the downfall of Germany, Thomas Mann must apply self-censorship to himself and his writing, for the source of creativity in the epoch they all three, Mann, Leverkühn, Zeitblom, inhabit is – the Devil.¹³

The question of the possible identity of the two main characters and their author takes a more structural turn in *Pale Fire*, but it has acquired just as much urgency over time as in *Doktor Faustus*. From the beginning, *Pale Fire* raised questions regarding its internal authorship.¹⁴ Despite Kinbote’s chagrin that Shade’s poem is not about him, but about the poet’s life instead, there are, as we have seen, numerous hidden allusions in both parts of the novel referring to each other that mainly raise the question of how Shade could have known what Kinbote was going to write in the commentary to his autobiographical poem after he has been killed. A heated debate about who wrote what in *Pale Fire* broke out (between December 1997 and February 1998) in a Nabokov discussion group on the Internet (Nabokov-L). There many critics argued for a single-author explanation, contending that *either* Shade *or* Kinbote must have written the whole text of *Pale Fire*. Among those who opted for a single-author explanation, Shadeans dominated, and one of the fiercest defenders of the thesis that Shade wrote the whole of *Pale Fire*, not just the poem, was Brian Boyd. The majority who opposed single authorship included Robert Alter, Ellen Pifer, and David Lodge. Dmitri Nabokov, the writer’s son, joined the Internet discussion with his

12 In *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, Mann confesses that he loves Adrian Leverkühn more than any other of his fictional characters. Given the fact that Adrian, as Zeitblom repeatedly tells us, always seems to be surrounded by an aura of coldness, that he shows a lack of warmth and emotion which we recognize as the effluvium of the Devil and the result of Adrian’s pact with Him, this statement is disturbing, especially since, at another place in *The Story of a Novel*, Mann goes so far as to call the Devil Himself “the secret hero of the book [*Doctor Faustus*]” (71).

13 See Heller 261: “[I]t is not only the desperate spirit of Adrian Leverkühn that enters into a pact with Satan. Life too, German life, is nothing if not bedevilled.”

14 Or, in the words of Brian Boyd: “How can we explain the stealthy signals between part and part, when the central irony of the novel appears to depend precisely on the lack of communication between part and part?” (Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* 114.)

recollection that his father thought the idea that *either* Shade or Kinbote could have invented the other barely less absurd than the idea that *each* could have invented the other.¹⁵ In his later 1999 study on *Pale Fire*, Boyd eventually rejects his former Shadean stance in favor of the notion that Shade, now a shade, influences Kinbote from the beyond, and his explanations are very detailed, subtle, and in parts illuminating and convincing. Still, I would like to adduce another explanation for the fact that the question of internal authorship seems to acquire more urgency the more we reread the novel, an explanation which directly relates to the notions of censorship and self-censorship.

Let me start with Nabokov's injunction to his students at Cornell that a reader is not a person who *reads* a book, but one who *rereads* it. Nabokov also tells his students why this is the case:

In reading a book, we must have time to acquaint ourselves with it. We have no physical organ (as we have the eye in regard to a painting) that takes in the whole picture and then can enjoy its details. But at a second, or third, or fourth reading we do, in a sense, behave towards a book as we do towards a painting.¹⁶

Gradually taking in the details of a book also implies, according to Nabokov, that we can look at it from different angles, viewing the writer either as a storyteller, or a teacher, or an enchanter.¹⁷ (By the way, I think that Thomas Mann would have agreed; he liked it, for instance, when his children called him a magician, when they called him "der Zauberer.") All three activities: storytelling, teaching, enchanting, eventually lead to an enhancement and an expansion of the reader's consciousness until, again according to Nabokov, "an artistic harmonious balance between the reader's mind and the author's mind" is established.¹⁸

It is easy to see why this Nabokovian way of reading literature must be prevented and if possible forbidden in countries with insecure regimes, and in dictatorships in particular. For it counterbalances any effort to control the minds of the citizens from the outside. J. M. Coetzee, in an essay titled "Emerging from Censorship," lucidly describes the state of paranoia which pervades governments that attempt to dominate and infiltrate the minds of their intellectual and liberal-minded citizens, for instance the Republic of South Africa from the early 1960s until about 1980, or Stalin's Soviet Union. He tells us that such paranoid governments behave "as though the air is filled with coded messages deriding them or plotting their destruction."¹⁹ Interestingly, Kinbote or Charles II, former King of Zembla, construes a version of Shade's death in *Pale Fire* that exactly

15 For an amusing summary of this debate see Boyd, *ibid.* 114–116.

16 Nabokov, "Good Readers and Good Writers," in: *Lectures on Literature* 3.

17 *Ibid.* 5.

18 *Ibid.* 4.

19 J. M. Coetzee, "Emerging from Censorship," in: *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* 34.

seems to mirror the expectations of such paranoid governments. Whereas the reader eventually discovers that John Shade was shot by the American Jack Grey, an escapee from an institution for the criminally insane who has come to wreak vengeance on Goldsworth, the judge who sent him there and whom Shade happens to resemble, Kinbote invents his own paranoid tale. At the moment of his death Shade, together with Kinbote, is walking over to the house of Judge Goldsworth, his neighbor, that is, to the house which Kinbote is renting for the year. Thus Kinbote might be superficially justified in assuming that Grey was actually out to shoot him, not Shade, and he immediately discovers and exploits what seems to be his advantage. He invents the regicide Jakob Gradus, alias Grey, who was born in Riga, arrived in Zembla in the 1940s, began to dabble in extremism, and who is finally selected to become the assassin of Charles II, who is living in New Wye in the United States at this point. In his notes, Kinbote traces Gradus's approach through various phases: from Zembla, first to Paris, then Geneva, Nice, New York, and eventually New Wye. In Kinbote's last note, Gradus steps into the foreground and, after having traveled thousands of miles to put the King of Zembla to death, suddenly shoots at *Shade* – sorry, at *Kinbote* – as they cross from Shade's house to the Goldsworth house. In sum, Kinbote asks the reader to believe that a non-existent Jakob Gradus has been plotting the King's assassination when in actual fact the criminal Jack Grey wanted to shoot *neither* Kinbote *nor* Shade, but Goldsworth. Such is the paranoid source of censorship – which in this case, however, also happens to point to the potential identity of Kinbote and Shade.

For there is another twist to the story. It will not escape the notice of the careful reader who is studying the details of the novel that Jack Grey is another name for John Shade. By implication, Jack Grey might be a manifestation of Shade's hatred of Kinbote. Shade might indeed have longed to kill Kinbote, but while Kinbote wants to believe he was the assassin's target, he could not accept that his "friend" John Shade was mentally out to shoot him, and so he invents Jakob Gradus as the origin story for Jack Grey.²⁰ Yet Jack Grey, Kinbote's *alter ego* for John Shade, ends up killing Shade. It is a story of self-censorship taken to extremes.

Unwittingly, Coetzee's essay also seems to take up this even more important aspect of Nabokov's novel. For Coetzee goes on to show how a state of unrelenting censorship that creates an atmosphere of unceasing official menace makes a person not only a repressed person, but a self-censored one, not only one watched over, but one who watches over himself (Coetzee 35). This situation also, or even especially, applies to the writer, for whom the censor will become a

20 For this astute observation I am indebted to Jane Hedgepeth, Austin, Texas.

kind of *alter ego* who forces him to read his own text with the eyes of another person. Or, to quote Coetzee once more:

Working under censorship is like being intimate with someone who does not love you, with whom you want no intimacy, but who presses himself in upon you. The censor is an intrusive reader, a reader who forces his way into the intimacy of the writing transaction, forces out the figure of the loved or courted reader. (38)

This description could very well serve to describe the ground situation in *Pale Fire*: while John Shade is writing his autobiographical poem “Pale Fire,” he is intimate with two readers, the loved and courted reader, his wife Sybil, and the intrusive reader, Charles Kinbote, who constantly spies on him from the various windows of his rented house; who presses himself upon Shade by asking him out for evening walks in the course of which Kinbote forces the poet to listen to nothing but his Zemblan adventures that he wants to become the heart and marrow of Shade’s new poem; who even crawls up to a window of Shade’s house in the dark of night and watches how he and Sybil cry over the part of the poem that relates the suicide of their only child. Here the petty, even grotesque features inherent in each and every censorship come to the fore. Kinbote does not yet know that Shade, like Nabokov himself, tends to write on index cards. He therefore tells the reader:

Not being aware at the time of the exact type of writing paper my friend used, I could not help wondering what on earth could be so tear-provoking about the outcome of a game of cards. As I strained to see better, standing up to my knees in a horribly elastic box hedge, I dislodged the sonorous lid of a garbage can. This of course might have been mistaken for the work of the wind, and Sybil hated the wind. She at once left her perch, closed the window with a great bang, and pulled down its strident blind. (PF 90)

Outraged, Kinbote realizes that while Shade tells *him* nothing about the poem he is composing, he continuously reads the parts he has just written to his wife. His misogynous hatred of Sybil increases, and also his ridiculous misconceptions about her. It is clear to the reader that Sybil knows who is spying on them, and that she wants to protect her husband from Kinbote’s prowling and his insidious influence; while Kinbote, after having gotten a hold on the manuscript after Shade’s death and realizing that his obsessive attempts to infiltrate Shade’s mind have failed, actually reverses the charge by accusing Sybil in his commentary of having been a “domestic censor,” of having “deliberately and drastically drained” her husband’s poem “of every trace of the material I [Kinbote] contributed” (PF 81). If Kinbote’s invention of Gradus is a prime example of how paranoid censorship functions, and of how it can be turned into self-censorship, the projection of Kinbote’s own self-hatred upon Sybil is necessary to save his idea of friendship with the poet. Like most censors he wants to believe that he is actually doing the object of his censorship a favor. As Shade’s intrusive reader

who, in unrelenting fashion, has first attempted to enter the poet's mind and afterwards undertaken to undermine the originality of his work, Kinbote even prides himself on this "friendship":

Surely, it would not be easy to discover in the history of poetry a similar case – that of two men, different in origin, upbringing, thought associations, spiritual intonation and mental mode, one a cosmopolitan scholar, the other a fireside poet, entering into a secret compact of this kind. (PF 80)

A secret compact indeed. Like Leverkühn's secret compact with the Devil. When Vladimir Nabokov wrote *Pale Fire*, he was living in Montreux at Lake Geneva, in a safe and beautiful country which he – like Thomas Mann before him – had chosen as a place of residence of his own accord. He could no longer, in all fairness, be called an exile, although he continued to see himself in this role and stressed it by the fact that he and his family lived in a hotel suite until the end of his life. And here, long after the fact, he wrote this novel about exile and self-censorship. In other words, we probably have to extend the scope of our analysis to include the author himself when we want to solve the question of internal authorship in *Pale Fire*. I do not mean to say that we should be looking for an implied author, but rather for such aspects of the novel where the author, sublimating the love-hate relationship between Shade and Kinbote, carries their conflict into the future and into a harmonious relationship with the reader who can thus become the figure of the beloved. If we succeed, we shall be able to say, with the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, that "the work of art goes ahead of the artist; [...] it is a prospective symbol of his personal synthesis and of man's future, rather than a regressive symbol of his unresolved conflicts" (175, 521).

In order to find out, however, if this form of relationship between exile and self-censorship that we have discovered in *Pale Fire* is generic, we should have another look at *Doktor Faustus*, since Nabokov would definitely regard Mann's novel as occupying the opposite end of the scale from his own. However, radical self-censorship can also be found in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. Not surprisingly, this attitude can only become evident in Chapter XXV, the centerpiece of the novel. For this chapter consists almost totally of a document *not* originally written by Zeitblom, who, driven by pity and terror, always forgives, always explains, always ameliorates the actions of his friend in the name of love. In the world of the novel, this decisive document was written by Adrian Leverkühn himself: It mainly consists of a dialogue documenting his conversation with the Devil, who appears to him one night during a long stay in Palestrina in Italy. (It ought to be mentioned in this context that Thomas Mann claims to have had a similar experience in that Italian town; Mann, *Doktor Faustus* 539). The dialogue does *not* include Adrian's actual pact with the Devil. That event had happened five years earlier when Adrian, while visiting a brothel, contracted syphilis, the

disease that would provide him with the illuminations and dazzling intellectual raptures necessary for the development of his genius, before sinking him into madness – a career closely modeled on that of Friedrich Nietzsche. The purpose of the Devil’s visit to Adrian Leverkühn in Palestrina is to confirm and explain and discuss his fate to come: that of the inspired, but doomed composer, the enormity of the time-span of twenty-four years of musical genius which Adrian is receiving from his adversary, and the inevitability of his final descent into Hell. The document comprising this dialogue between Adrian (“I”) and the Devil (“He”) is, as Serenus tells us, appropriately written on music paper and can thus be seen as one of Adrian Leverkühn’s “compositions.”

Initially Adrian claims to doubt the very existence of the adversary he encounters, telling Him that He, the visitor, is a figment of his, Adrian’s, imagination. And the reader is indeed invited to doubt the “reality” of the apparition. For right after entering the room, the Devil tells Adrian to get some extra warm clothes from his closet against the icy chill that is rushing off from him against Adrian. In the end, however, we find Leverkühn, awoken as if from a spell, sitting in his summer suit in the Italian villa where he is staying with his friend, and he does not remember having carried his coat and plaid rug back to the closet. Still, at this point Adrian has begun to believe in the existence of the Devil, and the question whether Adrian’s adversary is “real” or not has lost its relevance, because He Himself has taken care of it:

Deine Neigung, Freund, dem Objektiven, der sogenannten Wahrheit nachzufragen, das Subjektive, das reine Erlebnis als unwert zu verdächtigen, ist wahrhaft spießbürgerlich und überwindenswert. Du siehst mich, also bin ich dir. Lohnt es zu fragen, ob ich wirklich bin? Ist wirklich nicht, was wirkt, und Wahrheit nicht Erlebnis und Gefühl? Was dich erhöht, was dein Gefühl von Kraft und Macht und Herrschaft vermehrt, zum Teufel, das ist die Wahrheit, – und wär es unterm tugendlichen Winkel gesehen zehnmal eine Lüge.²¹

The question of fact versus fiction thus spirited away, Mann (and Adrian) seem to be free to make use of whatever historical or literary or musical sources about the Devil are available: the Chapbook (*Volksbuch*) of 1587; excerpts from the letters of Martin Luther, or from Grimmelshausen’s *Simplicissimus*; from Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*; Kierkegaard’s *Don Giovanni* essay on the musical erotic; the Wolf’s Glen scene of Carl Maria von Weber’s opera *Der*

21 Mann, *Doktor Faustus* 354. Cf. Mann, *Doctor Faustus* 258: “Your inclination, my friend, to inquire after what is objective, the so-called truth, while suspecting nothing of value in the subjective, in pure experience, is truly philistine and worth your overcoming. You behold me: Therefore am I here for you. Does it pay to ask whether I really am? Is ‘really’ not what works, and truth not experience and feeling? What raises you up, what augments your sense of energy and power and mastery is the truth, damn it – and were it ten times a lie viewed from a virtuous angle.”

Freischütz, and many more (Wimmer, Kommentar). Every great writer feels entitled to steal from other writers, but Mann was always convinced that he did it better than anybody else, because everything he stole was being metamorphosed into something completely his own.²² In this case Mann makes use of his artistic freedom to substantiate the role of the Devil as Adrian's internalized censor, who compensates for the shortcomings of his official biographer. The Devil's impact is as inescapable for Adrian as the theological, literary, or musical history of Germany. Accordingly, in the world of the novel, Mann has Adrian eventually inflict internal exile upon himself, because that is part of his demonic deal with the Devil. After Adrian has become stigmatized, he removes himself from his former surroundings. Whereas in his youth he studied, first theology, then music, in various places, Kaisersaschern, Halle, and Leipzig, before he moved to Munich and later to Italy, he soon chooses to live an ascetic life in a former abbey close to Munich, in a place called Pfeiffering, where the environment exactly resembles, piece by piece, his childhood environment on a farm in Thuringia. In this retreat he remains, with few intermittent exceptions that always seem to invite immediate and truly infernal punishment, until his time is up and he experiences his final descent into madness – at which point his mother comes to take him home to the place of his childhood. Collaterally, Adrian's biographer Serenus, the narrator, who has become a teacher of classics, also votes for internal, albeit political exile: He resigns from his teaching job when it becomes clear during the Third Reich that his opinions do not tally with those of the Party; he also becomes estranged from his two sons, who endorse the National Socialist Party's views. Thus, Adrian's compact with the Devil can definitely be seen as an expression of self-censorship: While officially withdrawing from society, Adrian – and, to a lesser degree, Zeitblom – have to cope unremittingly with the intimacy with Him who does not love, with the internalized censor in Adrian's case manifesting Himself as the Devil, as Hitler in Zeitblom's case. Consequently, art also seems to be no longer possible except as a form of constant self-censorship:

Es ist die Zeit, wo auf fromme, nüchterne Weis, mit rechten Dingen, kein Werk mehr zu tun und die Kunst unmöglich geworden ist ohne Teufelshilf und höllisch Feuer unter dem Kessel [...] Lädt aber einer den Teufel zu Gast, um drüber hinweg und zum

22 This, by the way, was the reason Mann also felt entitled to steal from both Adorno and Schönberg, but in their case Mann was unexpectedly caught up in his role as an exile in a community of exiles. He was obviously *not* permitted to treat Adorno and Schönberg like all the other artists he had stolen from; instead, he had to learn to treat them first and foremost as personalities, sensitive émigrés like himself, whose precarious German émigré culture took preference over his former comfortable cosmopolitan habits.

Durchbruch zu kommen, der zieht sein Seel und nimmt die Schuld der Zeit auf den eigenen Hals, daß er verdammt ist.²³

The question whether Adrian Leverkühn's fate is supposed to represent the fate of Germany under Hitler has often been raised,²⁴ but in this form it cannot be answered conclusively, in part because Mann has on the one hand firmly denied that the novel was conceived as an allegory; on the other hand he has unmistakably hinted at certain historical parallels between his fictional and his factual world, for instance when, in *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, he declares that he could not have created his image of Hell in *Doktor Faustus* without the psychological experience of Gestapo cellars (Mann, *Entstehung* 97). However, Adrian Leverkühn's rise and fall does not parallel that of the Third Reich; instead, as John Francis Fetzer has pointed out, the

time period for Adrian's pioneering creative output (1906–1930) coincides closely with the advent age of avant-gard [*sic!*] experimentation in the aesthetic media on a pan-European scale in general, as well as on the German scene in particular. This situation persisted until the condemnation of all forms of modernism as “degenerate art” under Hitler (a verdict which would definitely have applied to Adrian's music and led to its disappearance, if not destruction; Fetzer 55).

Serenus Zeitblom, in his biography, wants to salvage Adrian's art from such a disappearance, supposedly writing *Doktor Faustus* at the same time Thomas Mann wrote it, that is: from 1943 to 1947, and he hopes that future generations will learn to appreciate Leverkühn's genius. But basically, I would contend, Leverkühn's (and Mann's) art escapes the destruction it would have encountered in the Third Reich, because it is ultimately not an art troubled by censorship, but by self-censorship, and thus paradoxically capable of becoming an art that goes ahead of the artist.

One example must suffice to illustrate how the art of Mann and Nabokov takes their implicit self-censorship in *Doktor Faustus* and *Pale Fire* in the direction of an artistic achievement that does indeed go ahead of the artist. I am referring to the leitmotif of the butterfly – which appears in both novels and which for both authors becomes connected with a woman beloved by the artist: The Vanessa, or

23 Mann, *Doktor Faustus* 723. Cf. Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, p. 523 – 524: “It is an age when no work is to be done in pious, sober fashion and by proper means, and art has grown impossible sans the Devil's aid and hellish fire beneath the kettle . . . But should a man make the Devil his guest in order thereby to go beyond and break through, he indicts his soul and hangs the guilt of the age round his own neck, so that he be damned.”

24 See e.g. Heller, *The Ironic German* 264: “And if Adrian Leverkühn is not a perfect symbol of Germany, he is yet a symbol. He will, alas, be recognizable to many minds as one they know with dangerous intimacy.” Interpreting Adrian Leverkühn and his career as a symbol or an allegory for the fate of Germany was a view bound to diminish as the Third Reich receded into the past.