

## Unreliable Conservatism and the politics of music

Attfield, Nicholas

DOI:

[10.1080/00787191.2020.1840815](https://doi.org/10.1080/00787191.2020.1840815)

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*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Attfield, N 2020, 'Unreliable Conservatism and the politics of music: Eichendorff, Thomas Mann, and Hans Pfitzner at the end of the First World War', *Oxford German Studies*, vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 380-400.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00787191.2020.1840815>

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[10.1080/00787191.2020.1840815](https://doi.org/10.1080/00787191.2020.1840815)

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## **Unreliable Conservatism and the Politics of Music: Eichendorff, Thomas Mann and Hans Pfitzner at the End of the First World War**

Nicholas Attfield, University of Birmingham

### Abstract

*In a radio address of 1957, Theodor Adorno praised what he called Eichendorff's 'unreliable [unzuverlässig]' conservatism: a collection of qualities that allowed him to draw dynamically on a musical flow of conventional poetic elements while simultaneously affirming the promise of a shimmering utopian future beyond bourgeois trappings. This article considers these same qualities as valued by another writer Adorno admired, Thomas Mann, and his circle in the aftermath of the First World War. It argues, first, for Mann's identification (in the Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, 1918) of an exemplary national-conservative attitude in Eichendorff's Taugenichts, himself a musician wandering beyond the bourgeoisie; second, it observes the political potential of this attitude in Hans Pfitzner's setting of Eichendorff's poem 'Klage'. Finally, the article turns to three musical acts c.1918-1921 – a performance, a composition, and the expounding of music theory – in order to demonstrate the close relationship of Mann and Pfitzner at this time, and to position their combined thought as inspirational for a new national conservatism in music in the early post-war period.*

Bearing in mind his general reputation as a pessimist, it perhaps comes as little surprise to find Theodor Adorno cringing at the Romantic lyric poetry of Eichendorff. In an address prepared for Westdeutscher Rundfunk on the centenary of Eichendorff's death in 1957, Adorno draws attention to what he hears as these poems' shameless banality and vulgarity. 'Es war, als hätt' der Himmel / Die Erde still geküßt' he quotes as if with a wince, and 'Am liebsten betracht' ich die Sterne, / Die schienen, wenn ich ging zu ihr', and 'Lied, mit Tränen

halb geschrieben'. This is the sentimental stuff of school choirs and *Männergesangvereine*, Adorno insists, '[ein] Bilderschatz, der bereits zu seiner Zeit abgebraucht gewesen sein muß'.<sup>1</sup> Yet at the same time, a key purpose of Adorno's address is to grasp Eichendorff's overt banality as a principal source of the poet's value. He makes this banality inextricable, therefore, from what he calls the 'Ton des Affirmativen' of many of these lyrics, their 'Verherrlichung des Daseins'.<sup>2</sup> Though this quality has guaranteed the poet's presence in the low repertory, Adorno claims, it ought not to be dismissed as too trivial for analysis. Rather, it affords an opportunity to treat the subject at the heart of the address. This is the peculiar nature of what he sees as Eichendorff's 'unreliable [unzuverlässig]' conservatism – an admirable stance lost, he claims, to the contemporary conservatives of 1957 and one from which they could learn much, in spite of their easy admiration for the likes of Eichendorff and the strongly conservative tradition of reception in which he stands.<sup>3</sup>

It would be all too obvious, Adorno proposes, to follow this tradition and call on the poet's late prose writings in order to establish him as an aristocratic Catholic conservative with a worldview rooted in his sense of feudal dispossession. Far more incisive is to use the same writings to show Eichendorff as acutely resistant to the nascent bourgeoisie, even as he demonstrated clear awareness of the historical inevitability of the rise of this class, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Theodor Adorno, 'Zum Gedächtnis Eichendorffs', reprinted in Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur*, 4 vols (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1958), I, pp. 105-43. Quotations from Eichendorff's poems at pp. 108-09 and p. 121; closing quotation is found on p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Adorno, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Adorno, pp. 107-09 and, on Eichendorff's *Unzuverlässigkeit*, pp. 115-19. On Adorno's view of his contemporary conservatives – at whose uncritical advocacy of Eichendorff much of the early argumentation of the address is aimed – see also pp. 105-07, and particularly pp. 112-13.

necessity of the revolution for which it clamoured. As a result, Eichendorff's 'Ton des Affirmativen' is a more complex product than it first appears, leavened not only by his post-feudal glorification of existence past, but also by a 'vorbürgerliche Ferment', an ingredient that harries the stolid comforts of the bourgeoisie and refuses to let them settle.<sup>4</sup> His heroes are not family men, but wanderers; his poetry pours scorn on the ties of sedentary things like marriage, and is given to breaking down in despair of their conventionality. Yet more striking, this poetry often points mysteriously forwards, towards the horizon of a faintly eroticized utopia. Adorno thinks, in particular, of Eichendorff's famous 'Schöne Fremde' ('Beautiful Strange Land', but also, perhaps, 'Beautiful Stranger'), a text that ends with the line: 'Es redet trunken die Ferne / Wie von künftigem, großem Glück!'.<sup>5</sup> Such poems are unreliability itself from a staunchly conservative point of view: they indicate a worldview more drawn to a shimmering utopian future than to some past state of greater happiness, and more inclined to engage tradition dynamically than treat it as a lumpen mass of hortatory lore. They are thus, for Adorno, both laudable and instructive; they frame a conservatism that refuses to use the past simply to endorse, as in Adorno's contemporary world, the 'Rechtfertigung eines schlechten Bestehenden'.<sup>6</sup>

I begin with Adorno's Eichendorff here because this vision of the poet's conservatism has a strong resonance with the principal subject of the present article: namely, the forward-

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<sup>4</sup> Adorno, pp. 112-16. Quotations at p. 113 and p. 116 respectively. On Adorno's more usual short shrift towards such life-work hermeneutics, see, for example, Ulrich Plass, *Language and History in Theodor W. Adorno's Notes to Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 49-51.

<sup>5</sup> Adorno, pp. 116-19. 'Schöne Fremde' is quoted directly on p. 118; Adorno describes this poem as 'utopisch' on p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> Adorno, p. 113.

facing conservatism that came starkly to the fore in the circle surrounding Thomas Mann in Munich in the last years of the First World War, and the productive potential of music within it. Pressured by the times towards a personal turning point, a crisis state in which he had been impelled to scrutinize the fundamentals of his existence, Mann famously turned to the polemics of political conservatism against what he saw, at this moment, as the horror of Germany's progress towards democracy. This polemics is in large part what his contemporary literary project, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, begun in 1914 and published in 1918, sought to deliver.<sup>7</sup> Yet, through the same process, Mann also developed a more acute awareness of his Romantic inheritance and its mandate that he should steep himself in the subterranean connections between life and art, between his unearthed political conservatism and what he might champion of the artistic past. This means that the *Betrachtungen* is inevitably also an aesthetic statement, the record of a period of creative productivity unleashed by war. In addressing an overall 'Gefühlshaltung', it also treats the artistic consequences of 'eine aufwühlende Zeit fieberhaft gesteigerten Lebens [...]; eine Zeit, die wirkt wie der Tod: ordnend trotz aller Wirrnis, klarstellend, bestimmend; die uns lehrt, was wir waren und sind[.]'<sup>8</sup> Politics, aesthetics, and identity well up together in a single outpouring.

One effect of such bristling productivity entailed homing in on certain beloved cultural figures of the past – in this particular case, Eichendorff – and making use of their

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<sup>7</sup> The edition I use in the following is Thomas Mann, *Politische Schriften und Reden* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer, 1960), I: *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. As Mann makes clear in his Prologue (pp. 7-31), the *Betrachtungen* was far from his only polemical intervention around the time of the war; rather, it continued the binarizing trends of, for example, the essay 'Gedanken im Kriege', *Neue Rundschau*, 10 (November 1914), 1471-84.

<sup>8</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 139 ('Gefühlshaltung') and p. 349.

oeuvres as a way of understanding German conservatism, its myriad meanings for the artist in the war's aftermath, and its potential for the formation of a binary opposition against new democratic political impulses.<sup>9</sup> This project may have been clouded by a certain tragic irony, a sense of the inevitability of Germany's democratic 'progress' and thus the feared obsolescence of its conservatives as a political force. But it was no less coloured by what we might identify as something very like Adorno's conservative 'unreliability', a utopian, post-bourgeois trace that ultimately indicates a productive potential for the self-proclaimed 'Unpolitischen' and his circle in the early post-war years. As I shall argue, it was this same unreliable promise that Mann identified and mobilized in Eichendorff in the last years of the war and their aftermath.

Bringing Mann and Adorno together in this manner may, at first sight, seem a curious move. Yet, though the two probably only met in person as émigrés in the early 1940s, Adorno had long admired Mann, and, significantly, wrote of him as the living embodiment of the German tradition from which he (Adorno) had learnt everything – including, no less, 'die Kraft, der Tradition zu widerstehen.'<sup>10</sup> Moreover, both demonstrate a strong preoccupation with the German musical canon of the nineteenth century, and both use its assumed presence to mediate their treatment of Eichendorff. In Adorno's address, for example, it seems taken for granted that we will hear Eichendorff's lyric poems through Schumann's *Lieder* settings of them, and, in its coda – a programme note for the Eichendorff-*Liederkreis* (Op. 39, 1840) – Adorno proposes that '[Schumanns Lieder] bringen ein Potential der Gedichte heraus, jene Transzendenz zum Gesang, die entspringt in der Bewegung über alles bildhaft und begrifflich

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<sup>9</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 86.

<sup>10</sup> See Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Adorno: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), pp. 479-80.

Bestimmte hinweg, im Rauschen des Wortgefälles’ (‘Wortgefälle’, as Ulrich Plass points out, seems to be a term of Adorno’s own coinage; it might best be translated as ‘the word’s descending flow’, thus retaining the meaning of ‘Gefälle’ as a downwards-leading incline).<sup>11</sup> As romantically formulaic as all this at first sounds, it in fact draws on one of Adorno’s principal arguments regarding Eichendorff’s willingness to be ‘weak’ as a poet, to give himself and his subjects over to an autonomous language that engulfs and bears them along in a rushing, rustling, water-like torrent – a passive state Adorno calls *Selbstentäußerung* or *Selbstausslöschung* (literally, the ‘relinquishing’ or ‘extinguishing’ of self).<sup>12</sup> Thus, through its resulting uncontrolled repetition of stock phrases and imagery, Eichendorff’s poetry may court the linguistically conservative and trivially affirmative, all the sugary sentiments of popular choruses. But, by the same token, it urges enigmatically beyond the reach of such semantic components, giving voice to qualities of pure sound as word alights gently upon word. Again, its tone is unreliable: the inevitable conclusion, in fact, is that it aspires to the condition of music. Adorno’s *Selbstausslöschung* is a dissolution within a musical flow.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Adorno, p. 135 and Plass, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> On this willingness of the poet, see, for example, Adorno, pp. 119-20; *Selbstentäußerung* and *Selbstausslöschung* are found on p. 123 and p. 127 respectively. ‘Weakness’ is specifically mentioned on p. 130: ‘die Kraft des Dichters aber die zur Schwäche, die, dem Sprachgefälle nicht zu widerstehen eher als die, es zu meistern’.

<sup>13</sup> Adorno at first seems to argue against this claim, with the remark that ‘[d]ies Rauschen jedoch wird von der allzu hastigen Erinnerung an Musik versäumt’ (p. 128). The trajectory towards music is nonetheless clear. A page later, he speaks of Eichendorff’s language transcending itself, through its presentation of *die Rauschende*, to become music; the coda on

As we shall see in the first two sections of the present article, Mann, too, makes use of an idiosyncratic ‘self-extinguishing’ through music. But while Adorno uses his to back away from political discussion – to consider, instead, Eichendorff’s place as modernist alongside Baudelaire and Rimbaud, or within a wild ‘Unterstrom’ of German literary history running from Goethe to Brecht – Mann’s is just the opposite, a means of reconciling himself with the political sphere into which he had been unwillingly but necessarily driven, as the *Betrachtungen* record.<sup>14</sup> Through music, I shall suggest, Mann was able to reconsider the overwrought, conflicted, ‘ironic’ conservative self of the century’s first decades. As his Prologue describes, this self had been formed by his early experience of Nietzsche’s teachings, specifically the incitement to a ‘Selbstverneinung des Geistes’ (compare Adorno’s *Selbstausslöschung*) and ‘eine [...] begeisterte, erotisch berauschte Unterwerfung unter die “Macht”’ (compare Adorno’s submission to *Rauschen*), and the realization that these were an unlikely goal on account of the sheer tenacity and ubiquity of *Geist*.<sup>15</sup> Hence the resulting ‘ironisch’ posture, in which one had seemingly to strive for something that one knew to be unattainable. The seismic personal upheaval of the war had brought Mann to the awareness, however, that this same posture was intimately related to what he calls ‘das *nationale* Grundelement meiner Natur und Bildung’, the binary instinct of the German mind *for* the intoxicating allure of music and *against* the new political doctrine of democracy.<sup>16</sup> In turn,

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Schumann’s Op. 39, as we have seen, emphasizes music’s realization of the potential of *Rauschen*.

<sup>14</sup> See Adorno, pp. 119-20, and the epigraph to the essay (p. 105, from Verlaine). The ‘Unterstrom’ of German literature is mentioned on p. 121.

<sup>15</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, pp. 19-21 (p. 21); Mann’s emphasis.



this had its own tantalising political implications, not least that Mann's German Romantic heritage might be reframed so that it offered not only a collective solace for the privations of the war and its aftermath, but also a flourishing and forward-facing opposition, a national conservatism for the dawning post-1918 era. More specifically, it promised a national-*musical* conservatism. Indeed, I argue that, for the Mann of the *Betrachtungen* and the years immediately following, music does not so much *overlap* with politics as *become* it – in its peculiar abilities to create and express community, to bind the individual into a collective, and to project into the future while simultaneously restoring the bedrock of the past.<sup>17</sup>

In order to pursue these proposals, the third and final sections of the article turn to scrutiny of Mann's relationship with a composer who wrote countless settings of Eichendorff's poems – not, actually, the long-dead Schumann, but, significantly, someone living and experiencing his greatest notoriety at the war's end, in part through Mann's own endorsement. This is Mann's close friend of the time, the composer Hans Pfitzner (1869-1949), three of whose early post-war musical statements – a concert, a work, and a music-theoretical treatise – provide the telos of the present article. Again, the lyric poetry of Eichendorff, in all its treacherous 'unreliability', stands at the heart of each of these examples. Eichendorff's work and its inclination for music becomes, I shall argue, a foremost interest of Mann and Pfitzner in the immediate aftermath of the war, and is part of what binds them together as self-scrutinizing German artists and intellectuals. The potential of this musical flow to engage and engulf a national audience becomes, in turn, an urgent part of their common conservative project, a mark of their political commitment to the German mind born of the nineteenth century and still creative in the twentieth. In this immediate post-war

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<sup>17</sup> This proposal on the relationship of music and politics is largely inspired by John Street, *Music & Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), especially pp. 161-74.

context, musical, literary, and political activity merge into the same response, with music in the executive role; as resonant as this response is with the Wagnerian nineteenth century, it also allows insight into conservative artistic experimentation with this legacy in the earliest days of the aftermath of the war. Such experimentation was bolstered by the binary edifices established by Mann and Pfitzner; as we shall see in conclusion, it thus forms a starting point from which different avenues led, both into and away from the nascent German Republic.

**‘In einem wahrhaft liederlichen Grade’: disreputability, Germanness, and music.**

Eichendorff occupies a special place within Thomas Mann’s *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. We first catch sight of him after the end of the long discussion simply entitled *Politik*, the book’s most sustained, if heavily distended, attack on its principal contemporary targets – not least concepts of state and nation, Nietzsche’s legacy, and the calculus of politics and democracy. Now, opening a new chapter, Mann strikes a distinct pose, turning to face Eichendorff’s novella *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* (1826). If the *Betrachtungen* are in general characterized by looseness and repeated digression – creating, in Mann’s words, ‘ein Mittelding zwischen Werk und Erguß, Komposition und Schreibung’ – then the turn to Eichendorff comes as just another mannered eruption.<sup>18</sup> Yet it also offers a strangely grounding effect, ushering in one of the book’s longest literary-hermeneutic passages, and its sole treatment of a German Romantic piece of writing. Perhaps, then, following Mann’s musical lead elsewhere, we are best to consider it a striking variation in an overall theme-and-variations structure: the introduction of something new, but still familiar, somewhat antique and *innig*, pointing back towards the intent self-questioning of the German

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<sup>18</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 8; see also p. 209 and p. 215.

conservative that lies at the core of the book itself. ‘Man könnte von “Variationen über ein Thema” sprechen’, Mann writes, ‘wenn dieses Thema nur eben präzisere Gestalt gewonnen hätte’.<sup>19</sup>

That Mann wishes to find a sense of security in Eichendorff’s novella is immediately obvious. His rhetorical evocations of childhood fondness make it so: “‘Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts’... Weiß man noch? [...] Es hat doch wohl keinen Sinn, daß ich die Fabel rekapituliere?’<sup>20</sup> He talks of its recent celebratory edition, a publication ‘solemn Formats, gedruckt in klaren und großen deutschen Lettern auf schönes, starkes Papier’ ; he draws, too, on the ready stock of Romantic images and sounds within, paraphrasing them in exhaustive lists that stress both their easy banality and their irresistibility. This is the novella, he writes, ‘die wir alle in unserer Jugend gelesen haben, und von der uns allen all die Zeit her ein feiner Saitenschlag und Glockenklang im Herzen nachgeschwungen hat’: it is ‘Volkstanz im Sonntagsputz und wandernde Leierkasten, ein deutsch-romantisch gesehenes Künstler-Italien, fröhliche Schifffahrt einen schönen Fluß hinab, während die Abendsonne Wälder und Täler vergoldet und die Ufer von Waldhornklängen widerhallen’.

Even so, no less obvious in this introduction is Mann’s desire to unsettle such ready comforts. From the chapter’s first lines he simultaneously insists on the disreputability of Eichendorff’s text when measured against the values of bourgeois *Bildung*: its utter lack of conscience, of good breeding, of proper aspiration, of intellectual pedigree, and of gravitas. ‘[I]ntellektuelle Zucht’, and ‘solides Schwergewicht’ are some of the attributes Mann refuses to grant to the book; he also calls it ‘anspruchlos’ and ‘nichts weniger als wohlerzogen’.

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<sup>19</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> The quotations in this paragraph and the next are taken from Mann, *Betrachtungen*, pp. 279-80.

This extends to the very physicality of the ‘zerschlissenes Fetzen mit Eselsohren’ in which, he projects, his readers will first have encountered the story as impressionable youths, and which he lays against the newly embossed edition. It also persists in the irony Mann finds in the novella’s ‘happy’ ending: the declaration of the inevitable and imminent wedding is interpreted as nothing but the author dismissing his own story in a fit of clever frivolity. But the same disreputability is principally, and most effectively, found in the *Taugenichts*’s status as an itinerant musician, and his existential state on the very edge of bursting into song. Ironically, but typically for Mann, it is evanescent music that will give the *Taugenichts*, and the *Betrachtungen* chapter about it, their honed critical edge in his contemporary world, their condition of ‘politischer Unschuld’ that is at the same time also ‘Ruchlosigkeit’ in relation to the political affectations of the day. Indeed, when he states that the *Taugenichts* novella ‘der Tugend [...] in einem wahrhaft liederlichen Grade enträt’, he makes a sly pun about songfulness, about the link between disreputability and musicality.

The principal polemic thrust of this characterization is against the immediate target of the *Betrachtungen*, namely the *Zivilisationsliterat* (represented principally by Mann’s brother, Heinrich) who seeks to institutionalize within post-war Germany the *Weltanschauung* that Mann names, with mocking horror, ‘demokratische[r] Internationalismus’ – or, to reduce it to a single symbolic term, ‘die Politik’.<sup>21</sup> The implementation of this worldview entails, in Mann’s view, the imposition on life of a rigid system of values drawn from the Enlightenment – to replace, ‘wie der Jakobiner, Studium und ernsthafte Kenntnis der lebendigen Wirklichkeit durch “Vernunft”’.<sup>22</sup> Not the least of

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<sup>21</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 289.

<sup>22</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 287.

these rational values is the concept of ‘politische Tugend’.<sup>23</sup> ‘Von der Tugend’, accordingly, is the ironic title of the chapter on Eichendorff, and the Good-for-Nothing, as the wandering artist-musician, is celebrated for his utter ignorance of it, and the very self-righteousness that reifies it into a dogma by which to live.

Yet the long treatment that Mann gives the novella suggests that he wishes it to do more than serve simply as polemical foil to the *Zivilisationsliterat*. Rather, the duality he invests in the *Taugenichts* – canonic security rubbing shoulders with disreputability – points in several interpretative directions at once. On the one hand, it offers a foretaste of what Adorno will call Eichendorff’s conservative unreliability, his critical ‘vorbürgerliche Ferment’, his distaste for domestication.<sup>24</sup> On the other, it links to countless passages found elsewhere in the *Betrachtungen*, in which Mann muses self-critically on the nature of the German *bürgerlich* artist, and again finds duality at his heart. He writes, for example, of the inherent ambivalence of authorship (‘des Da und Dort, des Ja und Nein, der zwei Seelen in einer Brust’), and on the presence of ‘[d]er Artist, der Zigeuner und Libertiner’ within the German *Bürger* alongside his expected *Lebensform* of ‘Ordnung, Folge, Ruhe, “Fleiß”’.<sup>25</sup> Such passages point directly to Nietzsche’s famous analysis of the Germans – ‘als “Volk der Mitte” [...] unfassbarer, umfänglicher, widerspruchsvoller, unbekannter, unberechenbarer, überraschender, selbst erschrecklicher, als es andere Völker sich selber sind’ – and are deployed by Mann to define the German *Bürger* against the European democratic *bourgeois*

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<sup>23</sup> This expression is specifically found in Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 279, and is often paraphrased in the chapter that follows. See, for example, the section on the *politischer Literat* and the link he enforces between *die Vernunft* and *die Tugend* (pp. 289-90).

<sup>24</sup> Adorno, p. 116.

<sup>25</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 16, p. 101 and p. 77 respectively.

articulated by the war's end.<sup>26</sup> The latter's sharply outlined nationalism makes him a pawn of empty internationalism, while the former – Mann's 'Mensch der geographischen, sozialen und seelischen "Mitte"' – knows himself to be something uncapturable through any such 'political' concepts.<sup>27</sup> In his thirst to affect his audience, moreover, the German *Bürger* cleaves to another stamp of ambivalence drawn from Nietzsche, the notion of the 'doppelte Optik': in Mann's words, this is a desire to conquer, an 'Eroberertum' such as Wagner wielded, expressed through '[ein] aus Bedürfnis entsprungenen [Vermögen], nicht nur die Feinsten [...] zu fesseln, zu faszinieren, sondern auch die breite Masse der Schlichten'.<sup>28</sup>

Mann, after the huge success of *Buddenbrooks* (1901), clearly views each of these dual aspects as his own inheritance; the 'Bürgerlichkeit' chapter of the *Betrachtungen* might best be seen as a means of puzzling this inheritance out at length, and of finding a place for Wagner, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer in the same lineage.<sup>29</sup> But the 'Von der Tugend' chapter implies that Eichendorff is to join this common genealogy, too, not least because of the ways in which he teases at *bürgerlich* order while seeking entry to the 'Liederschatz der Jugend und des Volkes'.<sup>30</sup> Eichendorff is also, I would argue, to be understood as one of those artistic Germans who is 'Literat, aber mehr noch Musiker' – an award that Mann gives later in the *Betrachtungen* to his 'Dreigestirn' of Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche,

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<sup>26</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (Leipzig: Naumann, 1886), pp. 200-03 (p. 201).

<sup>27</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 24.

<sup>28</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 80.

<sup>30</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, pp. 280-81.

while simultaneously reserving it for himself and identifying it as a direct justification for what he calls ‘Patriotismus’ or ‘politisches Nationalgefühl’.<sup>31</sup>

With this inclination to music in mind, the specific moments from the Eichendorff novella that Mann cites are rather telling. These are typically those in which the Good-for-Nothing sits at rest – in the gardens of a Lombard inn, or in a treetop before the castle where his lady dances – and what is striking about them is that they are figured by Mann as moments of intent *listening*, in and through which the attendant subject loses his sense of place and identity in the world. ‘Es ist, als wäre ich überall eben zu spät gekommen’, writes Eichendorff, ‘als hätte die ganze Welt gar nicht auf mich gerechnet’.<sup>32</sup> Disoriented, his ego suspended, he anticipates the *Selbstausslöschung* of Adorno’s Eichendorffian characters; he becomes alienated, too, from the comfortable customs of the bourgeois – ‘Jeder hat [...] seinen warmen Ofen, seine Tasse Kaffee, seine Frau, sein Glas Wein zu Abend und ist so recht zufrieden’ – in a manner that seems deliberately intended by Mann to counter the instinctive ‘egoistische Selbstbewahrung’ of the politically virtuous *Zivilisationsliterat*.<sup>33</sup> But beyond this, the representation of such listening scenes in Mann’s *Betrachtungen* seem to hold heuristic purpose: it encourages an understanding of the world and even a mode of existence within it. It is not only the *Taugenichts*, after all, who is extinguished by the sounds that surround him; presented as they are by Mann’s evocative lists, Eichendorff’s sounding images should also leave the reader undone, ‘so daß einem die Ohren klingen and der Kopf

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<sup>31</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, pp. 237-78.

<sup>32</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 282. Compare Eichendorff, *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1970), pp. 20-21 and pp. 41-42, with Mann, *Betrachtungen*, pp. 280-83.

<sup>33</sup> Eichendorff, *Taugenichts*, p. 21; Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 282 and p. 288.

summt vor poetischer Verzauberung und Verwirrung'.<sup>34</sup> Thus Mann pursues a path that Adorno's reading, as we considered it at the beginning of this article, shuns: Mann uses Eichendorff to transfer the 'relinquishing of self' from poetic subject to reading subject, and to *perform* the way in which one might be. This is what gives his Eichendorff interpretation its contemporary force for Mann. One might declare oneself, as Mann does, 'ein Unorganisierter, Außenseiter und "Taugenichts"'.<sup>35</sup> One might behave like a musician, shunning politics and virtue by acting in the *liederlich* fashion.

At times it might seem that, for Mann, to do so is a simple and defining human activity, a matter of grasping for humane essence through music in some clichéd Romantic vein. Yet even humanity (here: 'Menschlichkeit') is a prize for Mann's conservative polemics. It is to be captured for the German *Taugenichts*, and in turn denied to the *Zivilisationsliterat*, the evangelist of a rationally managed and morally equalized world, an administered and false humanity.<sup>36</sup> The *Taugenichts* wishes to be nothing other than a human being and it is precisely this, Mann explains, that makes him 'wahrhaftig, der deutsche Mensch!'.<sup>37</sup> But his humanity is also his musicality, 'im Frührot wandernd und geigend oder im Baum über das weite Land hin meditierend'.<sup>38</sup> Mann's implication is that Germanness is given identity and form through music: that it is better played than explained, better heard than read, better felt in the flow of experience than confined in concepts. The German people

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<sup>34</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 280.

<sup>35</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 163.

<sup>36</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 137.

<sup>37</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 284. Or, as Mann puts it more broadly elsewhere, 'man [müsse], um ein Mensch zu sein oder zu werden, vor allem Nation haben' (p. 329).

<sup>38</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 284.



are, after all, 'kein Volk des Wortes'.<sup>39</sup> To be German is to be a musician. And vice versa: as Mann asks in a humorous aside early in the *Betrachtungen*, 'kann man Musiker sein, ohne deutsch zu sein?'.<sup>40</sup> It follows that it is in musical activity, in disreputable musical works, that further enquiry must fall; if there is to be an unreliable, productive, fervent impulse within this conception of nationality, it must be in music that further aspirations are placed.

### **'Da gibts was zu singen und schlagen': musical politics and utopia.**

For all the many thousands of words in Mann's *Betrachtungen*, the book is therefore ultimately poised on a grand and precarious irony. As a literary work, it fails to present a national-political Germanness worth conserving; Mann draws here on the tendency, present since the late eighteenth century, to construct the German nation around music rather than any other art form, particularly literature.<sup>41</sup> Such an ironic position is hardly lost on a mind like Mann's. On the contrary, it becomes structure: it is built into the design of the book and its binary oppositions. Conservatism (art, music, culture, aestheticism, nation: 'Böswilligkeit', in Mann's frequent characterization) is played off on almost every page

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<sup>39</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 119. See also p. 29: '[Deutschlands] größte Schwäche aber ist seine Unbereitschaft zum Wort. Es spricht nicht gut; und *faßt* man es in Worte, so klingen sie mesquin und negativ'. Mann's emphasis.

<sup>40</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 60.

<sup>41</sup> On the emergence of this position, see, for example, Celia Applegate, 'How German Is It? Nationalism and the Idea of Serious Music in the Early Nineteenth Century', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 21 (1998), 274-96.

against politics (democracy, virtue, Europeanism, civilization, literature: ‘Glück’).<sup>42</sup> As Mann bitterly accepts, the latter holds all the cards in the name of unstoppable post-war ‘progress’. Conservatism, on the other side, remains in a stance of knowing and hopeless defensiveness; or, in terms borrowed symbolically from Wagner, music must now die away in the face of civilization and democracy, ‘wie Nebel vor der Sonne’.<sup>43</sup>

Even so, Mann is no less conscious that musical endeavours – including, perhaps especially, those of a Wagnerian cast – will persist in and after the war, alongside literary ones. This simple fact alone proposes the artistic preservation of his national feeling, and with it the potential for disreputable behaviour, for a certain contrary defiance – or, as he puts it, ‘ein Element der Unsicherheit [...] die Möglichkeit, Denkbarkeit des Rückfalls bewahren’.<sup>44</sup> His well-known treatment in ‘Von der Tugend’ of *Palestrina* (1917), an opera by the close friend of his Munich artistic circle, Hans Pfitzner, demonstrates his awareness of this and, moreover, his tendency to welcome and wax lyrical on its creative disruptions. The work’s eponymous composer, Pierluigi da Palestrina, fits the ironic-conservative bill of the *Betrachtungen* perfectly, in that he despairs of his failing artistic powers and his ill-suitedness to the present times. He too, as Mann reports from Pfitzner’s libretto, finds himself existentially ‘einsam, tief im Walde’.<sup>45</sup> But through his own lone listening encounter – a kind of self-submission to a series of dead musical masters, the ghost of his wife, and a choir of

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<sup>42</sup> Germany is characterized as ‘böswillig’ on p. 36 of the *Betrachtungen*; Nietzsche is praised as having stated ‘das Böseste’ about the German character on p. 57. The link between an absolute ‘happiness [*Glück*]’ and political thought is explored on, for example, pp. 242-43.

<sup>43</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 50 (p. 29).

<sup>44</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 297.

<sup>45</sup> Mann’s quotation from the *Palestrina* libretto is found in *Betrachtungen*, p. 313.

angels – the orderly, peaceful Palestrina suddenly finds his genius. He composes the all-saving masterpiece, and in so doing becomes grounded through ‘eine erhaltend-schöpferische Tat’. ‘Er weiß nun’, writes Mann, ‘was er ist, wohin er gehört und wohin nicht, oder doch, wie weit er hierhin und dorthin gehört’.<sup>46</sup>

This begins to sound, then, like one possible consequence of musical self-dissolution, its other side: a grasping towards the security of identity, something that could be, or become, a national confession. If so, then another example, sandwiched in between Mann’s discussions of Eichendorff’s *Taugenichts* and Pfitzner’s *Palestrina*, completes the gesture. This also centres on an Eichendorff poem, ‘Klage’, a lament that, like Pfitzner’s opera, seems to model conservative defensiveness through its subject’s fervent wish to lie down in the deepest forest and so escape the foolishness of the times.<sup>47</sup> Yet Mann is equally keen to invest this lament’s subject with what he enigmatically calls ‘*vorwärts gerichtete Sehnsucht*’ (his emphasis).<sup>48</sup> As his chosen excerpts from the poem show, the precise nature of this longing is tantalisingly utopian. It might be restorationist (since its subject dreams of princely deeds of old), or chiliastic (since the Lord will come to smite the ‘*unechtes Regiment*’), or even erotic (since a vision of the goddess Aurora arises over the forest at its end). Its forwards-leading trajectory towards collectivity, on the other hand, is rather easier to trace. At the end of the poem, the lone forested subject of its first lines makes a call to ‘*ihr Getreuen*’ to awake amidst the lusty sounds of song and brawling, rather as if self-abandonment within nature were the same thing as self-dissolution into an embracing, revivifying, impassioned

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<sup>46</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 314

<sup>47</sup> For the complete poem, see, for example, *Eichendorffs Werke: Auswahl in vier Teilen*, ed. by Ludwig Krähe (Berlin: Bong & Co., 1908), I, pp. 105-06.

<sup>48</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 296.

community – particularly, perhaps, the ‘überindividuelle Gemeinschaft’ that Mann’s *Betrachtungen* had cited as the guardian of the ‘Erlebnishort aus früheren Epochen’, in opposition to the bondless *Gesellschaft* of Germany’s democrats.<sup>49</sup>

This is an intriguing equation, and it is within its terms that we should read Mann’s frequent reminders that Eichendorff’s ‘Klage’ had recently been given new aesthetic life. He tells us repeatedly that Pfitzner had set this poem to ‘herrlich’ orchestral music in 1915, and in so doing had publicly dedicated it (as one of two explicitly ‘German’ songs, Op. 25) to Alfred von Tirpitz, *Grossadmiral* of the German fleet.<sup>50</sup> In other words, and as Mann reports with evident glee, Pfitzner – a musician, an illiberal, an anti-democrat, a reclusive aesthete, another archetypal German artistic-*bürgerlich* conservative in the basic terms of the *Betrachtungen* – had been driven by the European conflict to make Eichendorff’s lament contemporary and national, to issue his creative own call of awakening.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Pfitzner’s musical setting of ‘Klage’ traces this same path towards the collective: the delicate *piano* hunting-horn figure of the opening, conventionally connoting space, landscape, *Einsamkeit*, and distance from human affairs, dissipates in the song’s central section, only to reemerge – bolstered by anthemic full brass and military percussion – as a complement to the

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<sup>49</sup> See, in particular, the *Politik* chapter of the *Betrachtungen*, pp. 179-88 (p. 188).

<sup>50</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 297; also p. 237 and p. 317. Pfitzner emphasizes the dedication (and its acceptance) to his publisher in a letter of August 1916, reproduced in *Hans Pfitzner Briefe*, ed. by Bernhard Adamy (Tutzing: Schneider, 1991), I, p. 240.

<sup>51</sup> For Mann’s account of Pfitzner’s politics, see *Betrachtungen*, p. 192 and pp. 316-18.

increasingly heroic baritone solo, who, for the closing exhortation to the ‘Getreuen’, is joined by a male chorus.<sup>52</sup>

Mann was clearly delighted by this. We might even go so far as to say that the peculiar conjunction of Eichendorff’s lament, Pfitzner’s orchestral song, and von Tirpitz’s submarines brings about a transformation in the *Betrachtungen*, a momentary dropping of its ironic guard, a submission once again to the raw force of political-national feeling that Mann had presaged early in the book when, tracing the lines of Nietzsche’s *Lebensphilosophie*, he had written of his long-frustrated desire for ‘eine [...] begeisterte, erotisch berauschte Unterwerfung unter die “Macht”’.<sup>53</sup> Certainly, the recollection of ‘böartig[e] Marschmusik’ seems to enable and unleash a series of remarkable broadsides on ‘die zukünftige Rolle der Kunst’:

[S]olange dieses Drommetentosen und Beckengeschmetter unter gesitteten Menschen statthaft bleibt, solange, mit Verlaub gesagt, wird es auf Erden auch Krieg geben. Die Kunst ist eine *konservative* Macht, die stärkste unter allen; sie bewahrt seelische Möglichkeiten, die ohne sie – vielleicht – aussterben würden. [...] [W]ird die ‚Menschheit‘ unter dem Absolutismus, der *Tyrannie* der Vernunft, der Tugend und des Glückes leben? Dann ist es desto wahrscheinlicher, daß die Kunst ganz und gar in die Opposition geraten – und daß alles, was sich in Opposition gegen diese letzte Tyrannie

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<sup>52</sup> See the piano-vocal reduction of the orchestral score, made by Otto Wittenbecher and published by Brockhaus-Verlag in 1915.

<sup>53</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 19. See also the discussion in Hermann Kurzke, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Irrationalität: Thomas Mann und der Konservatismus* (unpublished dissertation: Julius-Maximilians-Universität zu Würzburg, 1972), pp. 124-27.

befindet, ihr leidenschaftlich anhängen [*sic*] wird. Die Kunst wird die Führung jener Partei an sich reißen, welche den Umsturz der Tugendherrschaft betreibt, – und sie ist eine hinreißende Führerin.<sup>54</sup>

Structurally, these lines conclude his citation of Eichendorff's poem and Pfitzner's setting of it; rhetorically, they far overstep the ironic bounds of most of the *Betrachtungen* in their energy and the militaristic shrillness of their tone. They add, in short, an overtly counter-revolutionary political element directly inspired by aesthetic (musical) experience, something that is elsewhere ironized, muted, or otherwise more carefully couched.

It was precisely these kinds of strident passages that left their mark on a swathe of middle-class patriots, already attentive to Mann as a leading German cultural figure through his novels and his early wartime essays. As numerous commentators have pointed out, there were many responses that found solace, encouragement, and an arsenal of slogans in the book, and publicly heaped praise on Mann as a post-war protector of the fatherland.<sup>55</sup> This is

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<sup>54</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, pp. 296-97. Mann's emphasis. For 'böartige Marschmusik', see *Betrachtungen*, p. 296: the immediate contexts for this are Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* and Wagner's overture to *Tannhäuser*, a typical evocation of the German-Russian axis underlying many of the book's cultural reference points. On this axis ('Es ist für mich keine Frage, daß deutsche und russische Menschlichkeit einander näher sind als die russische und die französische'), see, for example, p. 327.

<sup>55</sup> See Paul Egon Hübinger, *Thomas Mann, die Universität Bonn und die Zeitgeschichte: drei Kapitel deutscher Vergangenheit aus dem Leben des Dichters* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1974), pp. 59-68. For a more apologetic view of Mann's *Betrachtungen* against its reception, see also Frances Lee, *Overturing Dr. Faustus: Rereading Thomas Mann's Novel in Light of Observations of a Non-Political Man* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), pp. 42-46.

hardly surprising, bearing in mind Mann's incitement in the *Betrachtungen* for a hierarchical *Volksstaat*, or his complaint, itself contributing to embittered right-wing rhetoric, that '[d]ie Auflösung unseres Volksbegriffs durch den Geist des Auslandes, durch den Marxismus, diese Verschmelzung von französischem Revolutionarismus und englischer Nationalökonomie, ist weit genug vorgeschritten'.<sup>56</sup> But there were responses, too, that specifically followed Mann's lead to bring music into the fray. In Pfitzner's proclamation of the 'end of music' (*finis musicae*), a slogan repeated several times by Mann in the *Betrachtungen*, the philosopher Alfred Baeumler identified a productive dialectical moment issuing from the composer of *Palestrina* himself: 'Noch nie ist eine Zeit des Verfalls nicht auch zugleich eine Zeit neuer Keime gewesen. Was heißt also "Ende"?'<sup>57</sup>

Within the same trend of music-oriented reception, we should surely place Mann's own pioneering role in establishing a society dedicated to Pfitzner in Munich in June 1918.<sup>58</sup> In the first instance one can certainly see this in terms of the *Betrachtungen*, as a rebuttal of the democratic dogma that '[d]er große Mann ist abzuschaffen, ist auszurotten, ist auf das

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<sup>56</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, pp. 272-74 (p. 274).

<sup>57</sup> See the letter to Thomas Mann in *Thomas Mann und Alfred Baeumler: eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Marianne Baeumler, Hubert Brunträger and Hermann Kurzke (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1989), pp. 74-89 (p. 87). Mann calls 'finis musicae' a 'Traumsymbol für die Demokratie' (*Betrachtungen*, p. 30).

<sup>58</sup> On the founding of the Pfitzner-Verein, see Helmut Grohe, 'Zur Geschichte und zum Schicksal zweier Vereinsgründungen im Zeichen Hans Pfitzners', in *Festschrift aus Anlaß des 100. Geburtstags am 5 Mai 1969 und des Todestags am 22. Mai 1969 von Hans Pfitzner*, ed. by Walter Abendroth and Karl-Robert Danler (Munich: Winkler, 1969), pp. 69-83.

gemeine Maß zurückzubringen, Bruder unter Brüdern'.<sup>59</sup> Part of the intention of the new Pfitzner society, after all, was to testify to the composer's greatness above his countrymen: 'für den einzelnen Meister zu zeugen, sein persönliches Werk zu pflegen, seinen Ruhm zu verbreiten'.<sup>60</sup> But the full title of the new organization – the Hans-Pfitzner-Verein für deutsche Tonkunst – advances its larger goal and makes a further connection to the idea of art as heroic-historical worldview, and as national-political incitation. In the words of Mann's inaugural address, the Verein should not only augment Pfitzner's fame, but should also propagate 'Tonschöpfungen, aus dem Ethos dieses Meisters geboren, deren Volkstümlichkeit, weil sie schlummert, der Erweckung und der Verwirklichung bedarf'.<sup>61</sup> Again, as in Mann's reading of Eichendorff's 'Klage', we encounter the trope of awakening as a national-political experience. With all distancing irony apparently to one side, Mann's Pfitzner-Verein suggests an attempt to define and deliver the German national *Volk* in and through musical works and practices. There was no matter more urgent, as one enthusiastic music-journal respondent put it: this struggle for the *Volk* was analogous to war and its question of the 'Sein oder Nicht-Sein unserer Kultur' – and thus as much a forward-looking enterprise as one oriented towards a dwindling past.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 272.

<sup>60</sup> Mann, 'Aufruf zur Gründung des Hans-Pfitzner-Vereins für deutsche Tonkunst', reprinted in *Rede und Antwort: Gesammelte Abhandlungen und kleine Aufsätze* (Berlin: Fischer, 1922), pp. 289-90. The date of the address is incorrectly given here as 1919.

<sup>61</sup> Mann, 'Aufruf', p. 290.

<sup>62</sup> See Willibald Nagel, 'Hans-Pfitzner-Verein für deutsche Tonkunst', *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, 18.39 (June 1918), 259-60.



### **‘Romantisch-dämonisch Gefühlsverworrenheit’: musical conservatism in practice.**

Modelling the precise relationship of the Pfitzner-Verein to the German audience is by no means straightforward. The society existed until 1933, when it was finally disbanded as part of the Nazi *Gleichschaltung*.<sup>63</sup> But there is little evidence that it fulfilled its stated intention to champion and revive *volkstümlich* scores in the meantime. Far easier to trace are the activities of a broad circle rooted in the Munich *Verein* and devoted solely to the promotion of Pfitzner’s own reputation and works. These effectively situated German musical *Volkstümlichkeit* in a single figure, thus limiting the society’s breadth of impact, while still maintaining its opposition to the apparent democratic desire to do away with such individual indulgence in politics and culture. The resulting *Verein* is curiously poised: its statements on Pfitzner and *Volkstümlichkeit*, as above, promise to locate the elite in the popular and thus collapse the binary that divides them; but simultaneously it upholds the same binary through its insistence on the pedestal for the ‘great man’, the guiding figure who might bring together a sacred *Volksgemeinschaft* from the scattered masses. The conservative nexus already established – that between Eichendorff and Thomas Mann and Pfitzner – becomes key to the management of this overt tension; in the early aftermath of the war, we find the same nexus reflected and extended through a series of interconnected musical practices that speak directly to the problem of pressing this German conservative artistic elitism through popular channels: composition, performance, and, in conclusion, the expounding of a new music theory.

The setting of Eichendorff’s ‘Klage’ in 1915 was, in short, only an early auguring of the kind of ‘non-political’ politicization through music advanced by Mann’s *Betrachtungen*,

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<sup>63</sup> See Grohe, p. 75.

our subject thus far. Though Pfitzner had been setting Eichendorff's poems since his Op. 5 of 1888, and would continue to do so until the early 1930s, the years immediately following the end of the war are particularly significant. This was the period when, at the highpoint of their friendship in Munich, Mann and Pfitzner, the self-proclaimed 'Eichendorff-Spezialist' in music, most directly inspired and incited one another's work.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, Pfitzner's reported fury at scepticism towards Eichendorff's ability as a poet suggests that he treasured something similar to Mann about him.<sup>65</sup> This was very likely the easily-ridiculed simplicity and Romantic imagery of his poems, and their related appeal to the composer of *Lieder*. But it was surely also the suitedness of these poems to the present moment, as the very inclusion of the *Taugenichts* section in Mann's *Betrachtungen* had confirmed. In early 1915, in fact, Pfitzner had written to the publisher Max Brockhaus about his newly composed 'Klage' after Eichendorff, stressing the setting's aptness for the times, and the need to have it printed and performed as quickly as possible in contemporary Germany.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> A detailed account of Pfitzner's *Lieder* for voice and piano – of which 19 are settings of Eichendorff, far more those of any other poet – can be found in Richard Mercier, *The Songs of Hans Pfitzner: A Guide and Study* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998). On Pfitzner's fondness for the poet, see, for example, the letter to Felix Wolfes of March 1941, in *Hans Pfitzner Briefe*, I, p. 883.

<sup>65</sup> See the account of Josef Hofmiller, another member of the Pfitzner-Mann circle, in *Josef Hofmillers Schriften: Revolutionstagebuch*, ed. by Hilda Hofmiller (Leipzig: Rauch, 1938), II, pp. 93-4. The sceptical remarks were apparently made by Paul Busching, a founding member of the Pfitzner-Verein and one of the editors of the *Münchner neueste Nachrichten*.

<sup>66</sup> See *Hans Pfitzner Briefe*, p. 216.

A *Lieder* recital of late October 1919 gives a further indication of how Mann and Pfitzner moved to mobilize Eichendorff for their conservatism of these years. The event is a clear example of their circle at work, in that it took place at one of its favoured venues, the Munich *Vier Jahreszeiten* hotel, and featured the leads of Pfitzner's recent operatic success *Palestrina* – the soprano Maria Ivogün and the tenor Karl Erb – as showcase vocalists. The composer himself accompanied the singers at the piano. Songs by Pfitzner and Schumann were presented, after which came what Mann recorded in his diary as the 'pièce de résistance'. This was a rendition of Schumann's Eichendorff-*Liederkreis*, Op. 39 in which, unusually for a *Lieder* performance, the lights of the recital room were extinguished.<sup>67</sup>

There are numerous ways of reading these odd performance conditions. In view of the performance year of 1919, we might think immediately of pragmatic reasons like fuel shortages; we might also wonder about certain cues given out by Eichendorff's texts themselves, as in the famous 'Zwielicht' ('Twilight') poem that Schumann sets as the tenth song of the cycle. Or, in broader aesthetic terms, we might point to the practices of various European concert-hall reformers who, often drawing on the model of Wagner's Bayreuth, sought ways of hiding the distracting bodies of performers and fellow audience members, and

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<sup>67</sup> See the review of the recital by Alfred Einstein, *Münchener Post*, 5 November 1919, in which the event is called an 'Experiment', and specific mention is made of the unusual 'Verdunkelung des Saales'. This review is reproduced in Kurt Dorfmueller, 'Alfred Einstein als Musikberichterstatter', in *Festschrift Rudolf Elvers zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Ernst Hertrich and Hans Schneider (Tutzing: Schneider, 1985), p. 134. For broader context, see also Arthur Neißer's review of an earlier Pfitzner concert in *Der Merker* 1 (1910), 909: again, a practice of 'Saalverdunklung' is indicated here for a performance of Schumann's song cycles.

thus of focusing concentration on the ‘pure’ aesthetic experience and the transcendence it might afford.<sup>68</sup> But beyond these, and bringing them together somewhat, we might also consider these recital conditions as a key example of conservative experimentation, in this case with an aesthetic concept in which management and conversion of a differentiated mass audience into a whole is implicit: namely *Stimmung*. This term translates conventionally as ‘mood’, or ‘atmosphere’. But in stage aesthetics, *Stimmung* is strongly familiar from the writings of Pfitzner’s (and Mann’s) idol Richard Wagner, who wrote frequently of the importance of creating the overall *Stimmung* of an operatic scene, in and through which his audiences might find utmost receptivity to the drama, and anticipation for its continuation; here *Stimmung* closely follows its etymology towards a meaning of ‘attunement’ or ‘agreement’ between observers and observed, collective as well as individual.<sup>69</sup>

In the *Betrachtungen*, Mann had recognized these artistic, performative, and emotional connotations of the term and had attempted to bind them into his discourse of the non-political man, the artistic *Bürger* in the wake of Wagner. Where progressiveness is ‘ein Prinzip’, he writes, conservatism is ‘eine Stimmung’ – something profoundly felt rather than arrived at by reason, a mystical matter of love, as he puts it, ‘dem ewigen Geheimnis’.<sup>70</sup> (Democratic politics is described, on the other hand, in terms of *Atmosphäre*; it is surely

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<sup>68</sup> On these practices, see Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 102-08.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Wagner’s ‘Bericht über die Aufführung des “Tannhäuser” in Paris’ (1861), reproduced in Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* (Leipzig: Fritsch, 1873), VII, pp. 190-01; see also Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, IV: *Oper und Drama*, p. 274.

<sup>70</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 299.

significant that Mann chooses the overtly Greek-derivation word here rather than the German *Stimmung*, which he reserves for his ‘non-political’ conservatism).<sup>71</sup> As such, *Stimmung* cleaves readily to the arts, particularly in Mann’s romantic-musical presentation of them, and becomes a function of their performance. We can easily imagine the Pfitzner *Lieder* recital as a means of ‘attuning’ its audience to conservative feeling: borne along without pause by the twilight performance of Schumann’s Eichendorff cycle, this audience seems intended to attain and agree on some increased receptivity to its Germanness in Mann’s music-conservative sense, insiders against an unfeeling outside. The effects of a ceaseless musical flow would be heightened by the fact that, in another experimental feature of the concert, Pfitzner played interludes of his own invention between each of the songs, otherwise left discrete by Schumann.<sup>72</sup> Yet, true to the spirit of the *Betrachtungen*, there was no simple message or straightforward experience to be recovered here. On the contrary, Mann’s cue in his diary, his own response to the experience of ‘Zwielicht’ at the recital, hints at how he felt it should be received. This was ‘Kunst der romantisch-dämonischen Gefühlsverworrenheit’, he states.<sup>73</sup> The attuning chord, then, was for Mann actually one of confusion. What Adorno, reading the same Eichendorff poem, calls paranoid-schizoid ‘Selbstentfremdung des Ichs’, Mann revels in as a kind of pleasurable alienation, a momentary loss of self that also points towards the patriotic.<sup>74</sup> Within this songful *Stimmung*, we might reflect, were the conflicts with which ‘die Seele, de[r] Kopf, das Herz des deutschen Individuums’ were riven, in the

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<sup>71</sup> For *Atmosphäre*, see Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 226 and p. 420.

<sup>72</sup> On these piano interludes, again see the review of the concert in Dorfmueller, p. 134.

<sup>73</sup> Mann, *Tagebücher 1918-1921*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1979), p. 310.

<sup>74</sup> Adorno, pp. 122-23.

characteristic terms of the *Betrachtungen*; here too could one gain an experience, as with Wagner's works, 'von der tiefen Herrlichkeit sowohl wie von der quälenden Problematik deutschen Wesens'.<sup>75</sup>

If this 1919 recital can be called somehow subtle – small-scale, intimate, crepuscular, *stimmungsvoll*, ironic-conservative in its appeal to a doubleness of feeling – the major work that grew directly from it draws on similar contents but also sends them outwards into public pomp. Pfitzner's self-proclaimed 'romantische Kantate', *Von deutscher Seele*, begun around the time of the recital and first performed in early 1922, is also clearly a kind of Eichendorff cycle, in that its many texts are drawn only from Eichendorff. But it is a cycle that, from piano and voice alone, has grown to encompass numerous soloists, a full orchestra, chorus, and organ, all the trappings of the late-romantic concert-hall ceremonial.<sup>76</sup>

Again, the work is a ceaseless flow of moments of what Mann would call *Gefühlsverworrenheit*, particularly intimations of death amidst sudden upsurges of irrepressible life; its vocal stretches, moreover, are contrasted with obvious attempts at staged *Stimmungen* that silence the voices for long periods, and which, underneath Eichendorff-like written titles ('Abend', 'Ergebung'), proceed in evocative instrumental tones alone.<sup>77</sup> The

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<sup>75</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 40 and p. 56.

<sup>76</sup> On the genesis of the cantata, see John Williamson, *The Music of Hans Pfitzner* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 259-60.

<sup>77</sup> For the score, see the piano reduction published by Adolph Fürstner (Berlin, 1921). The environs of the instrumental section entitled 'Ergebung' (pp. 102-07) are a good example of the work's *Gefühlsverworrenheit*: this section's wandering solo flute, marked *sehr ausdrucksvoll*, are immediately succeeded by the violent percussion and driving rhythms of 'Der jagt dahin, daß die Rosse schnaufen'.

most immediately striking feature is that Pfitzner's final title for the work – eventually preferred over 'Eichendorffiana' and 'Aus Eichendorff's Seele' – makes this idiosyncratic musical structure an explicit emanation of the 'deutsche Seele'.<sup>78</sup> To forge such national links seemed crass to some in his circle, and politically risky to his publisher;<sup>79</sup> but surely not to Mann, as the whole cantata recalls various moments in the *Betrachtungen*, not least Mann's placing of art amidst the contradictions of the German soul, and his characterization of the highest German artistic practice as 'durch die Form bezwungene, befreite und befreiende Erkenntnis des Lebens'.<sup>80</sup> *Von deutscher Seele* could even be called an attempt to explore these conservative-artistic positions in a grand public setting, through which the intimate *Lieder* atmosphere might become larger collective experience. Indeed, when the memorable melodies of the cantata's opening return at its end, newly bolstered by the full weight of the lavish ensemble and choir's utopian community, the work seems to grasp for a distinctly *popular* tone that shades into the vulgarity of its overall title and leaves its trace on form.<sup>81</sup> One thinks of Adorno's grappling with Eichendorff's 'Ton des Affirmativen', a glorifying front behind which lurked an intricate conservative politics, but also of Pfitzner's claim that his music had absorbed from the specific essence of the poet something 'eingänglich' and

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<sup>78</sup> On these prior titles, see *Hans Pfitzner Briefe*, p. 321 and p. 324.

<sup>79</sup> A literary member of Pfitzner's circle, Josef Hofmiller's dismissal of works with such national titles can be found in *Josef Hofmillers Schriften*, pp. 20-21; the concerns of Pfitzner's publisher are found in the letter of June 1921 in *Hans Pfitzner Briefe*, pp. 327-28.

<sup>80</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 231.

<sup>81</sup> For these returning melodies, see the piano reduction (Berlin: Fürstner, 1921) and compare, for example, p. 158 ('Faß das Steuer...') with p. 3; also p. 163 with p. 54.

‘populär’.<sup>82</sup> Fired by Eichendorff’s tone, but also by Mann’s scrutiny of the German soul, the reticent, elite conservative Pfitzner here reconciles with the popular, and attempts to take a deliberate step towards public notoriety as national composer.

### **Concluding remarks: potency and impotence.**

Since Thomas Mann destroyed his diaries for 1919-21, we will likely never know his first-blush response to the cantata *Von deutscher Seele*. But we do have, at least, an idea of his thoughts on a contemporary work of Pfitzner’s, the music-theoretical polemic *Die neue Ästhetik der musikalischen Impotenz*, written alongside the cantata and published in 1920. Mann refers to it simply as ‘schlecht geschrieben’.<sup>83</sup> All considerations of literary style aside, this was probably a response to its open antisemitism, newly wielded by Pfitzner against the book’s primary target, the music critic Paul Bekker. It may also have been a rejection of Pfitzner’s key terms, the modern ‘impotence’ of German music and his proposed paths towards its remedy, that is, his sensationalist attempt to move the terms of debate over the ‘end of music’ into the realms of sex, masculinity, and the struggle for survival and supremacy. In any case, the phrase marks the beginning of Mann’s estrangement from the Pfitzner circle, which proceeded for the next few years and culminated in a divisive exchange of letters in 1925, in which Mann openly renounced his support for the composer and the

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<sup>82</sup> Pfitzner’s comment on Eichendorff’s essence is found in a letter to Johannes Oertel, in *Hans Pfitzner Briefe*, p. 302.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1918-1921*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1979), p. 347.



forward-facing role in which the *Betrachtungen* and its aftermath had placed him.<sup>84</sup> One wonders, indeed, whether the title of Mann's famous address in support of the new democratic regime, 'Von deutscher Republik' (1922), was in part intended to be received as a direct riposte to Pfitzner's cantata. In its published version, after all, Mann writes that 'wirklich und echte deutsche Popularität' can never be 'von völkisch enger, plump aggressiver und humanitätsloser Art', and insists on German romanticism as 'eine ausgemacht intellektuellistische Kunst- und Geistesschule', as opposed to its commonplace presentation, familiar from the cantata, as 'Traum, Einfalt, Gefühl oder noch besser "Gemüt"'.<sup>85</sup> In contrast to the *Betrachtungen*, he also argues that 'Demokratie [...] sogar das Niveau der deutschen Romantik haben kann', and, perhaps most striking of all, uses Walt Whitman's 'anatomisches Liebeslied' to ground the ontology of the beautiful soul within that of the sensual, erotic body – a most anti-Pfitznerian move, at least on the evidence of the chaste, often ethereal *Von deutscher Seele*.<sup>86</sup>

Even so, it should be added that a curt expression like 'schlecht geschrieben' also echoes the *Betrachtungen*, in the Prologue of which Mann had lamented that his readers would consider him 'ein schlecht Denkender, schlecht Gesinnter, als schlechter Charakter' because he had attempted to defend 'Absterbendes, Hinfälliges'.<sup>87</sup> Badness, then, had appeared there as another synonym for conservatism, a struggle against the times themselves

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<sup>84</sup> On this exchange, see, as one example, Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 254-55.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Mann, 'Von deutscher Republik', in *Politische Schriften und Reden* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer, 1960), II, p. 102 and p. 120.

<sup>86</sup> Mann, 'Von deutscher Republik', p. 118 and p. 126.

<sup>87</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 15.

that might nonetheless do them a service. In fact, it is no difficult task to find passages in Pfitzner's 'romantisch-politisch' *Impotenz* book that recall certain arguments in Mann's *Betrachtungen* – particularly those on the 'ewig[e] Physiognomien' of nations, and on the profound connection between the greatest achievements in art and national life.<sup>88</sup> At times *Impotenz* even seems like an extension into music theory of the *Betrachtungen*, a taking up of the same thread by the dedicated music specialist, an expansion into realms that Mann was not qualified to chart. Both books, for example, offer a revisionist approach to Schopenhauer: Mann in terms of the philosopher's idiosyncratic national-artistic-*bürgerlich* identity, and Pfitzner in terms of his metaphysics.<sup>89</sup> According to Pfitzner's (revised) Schopenhauer, music is capable of presenting far more than the unmediated stirrings of the universal Will. Rather, it is indelibly marked with a national stamp, and this explains the self-evident – to Pfitzner, at least – difference between national musics and their expressiveness. 'Eine italienische Freude ist also doch schon etwas anderes als eine russische Freude', he writes, 'eine polnische Wehmut anders als eine deutsche Wehmut'.<sup>90</sup>

By this logic, it follows there are some musical works in which, properly attuned, one can simply *feel*, as well as hear, Germanness – to the extent that Pfitzner makes a strongly national-mystical turn and writes of 'das Gefühl des *Wiedererkennens*' in certain musical encounters, a seamless merging of the course of one's own life to streams welling up from a

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<sup>88</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 111 and p. 188. The description 'romantisch-politisch' is Mann's, in a diary entry of June 1919, reproduced in *Tagebücher 1918-1921*, p. 274.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, Mann, *Betrachtungen*, pp. 97-99.

<sup>90</sup> Pfitzner, *Die neue Ästhetik der musikalischen Impotenz: ein Verwesungssymptom?* (Munich: Süddeutsche Monatshefte, 1920), pp. 83-86 (p. 86).

hazy national past.<sup>91</sup> One such encounter is Wagner's march from *Tannhäuser* – also a favourite of Mann's, as the *Betrachtungen* make clear.<sup>92</sup> But for another, Pfitzner takes his readers back to a familiar place: the seventh song of Schumann's Op. 39 Eichendorff cycle, 'Auf einer Burg'. The effect here, he claims, does not simply stem from Schumann's setting, but from its perfect consonance with Eichendorff's poem, the two flowing together to create a single *Stimmung*. 'Ich weiß genau', he writes with a sense of stunned *Wiedererkennen*,

daß es Nachmittag gegen zwei Uhr ist. Tiefe Apathie der Natur. Menschenleere Waldeseinsamkeit. Heiße, flimmernde Luft – alles schwimmt wie im Halbtraum [...] – störend sind die tiefer vom Rhein dringenden Menschenlaute [...] Warum rührt dies kleine Gebilde so alle Tiefen des Gefühls auf? Die Naturstimmung an sich ist es nicht; tausend Variationen von ‚Pan schläft‘ oder ‚l'après midi d'un faune‘ oder ‚d'un vieux chevalier‘ lassen mich bei aller möglichen Hochschätzung herzlich kalt. Aber hier – ich kenne es, ich habe es erlebt, diese Bilder, diese Stimmung – die Harmonien scheinen sich in der Luft zitternd selber zu bilden – *hoc est*.<sup>93</sup>

In Pfitzner's terms, then, Schumann-Eichendorff's 'Auf einer Burg' was a song of great significance: evoking and reanimating the past, it attuned the listener against the modern, and, judging by the works that leave Pfitzner cold, the foreign. As such, it simultaneously preserved potential for the future; it offered, in short, *musikalische Potenz*. And even if Mann, by 1920, was beginning to question such terminology and its strongly sexualized

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<sup>91</sup> Pfitzner, *Die neue Ästhetik*, p. 83. His emphasis.

<sup>92</sup> See Pfitzner, *Die neue Ästhetik*, pp. 66-67, and Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 296.

<sup>93</sup> Pfitzner, *Die neue Ästhetik*, p. 88. His emphasis.

implications of masculinity, virility, and race, he could hardly have complained of the extension of his own binary rhetoric to meet it. ‘Man *ist* Politiker oder man *ist* es nicht. Und *ist* man es, so *ist* man Demokrat’, he had written in the *Betrachtungen*: just so, echoed his supporters without a trace of irony, one is German or one is not, and one is impotent or one is not.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, it had been obvious from the early reception of the *Betrachtungen* that Mann’s bold ‘masculinity’ in making such direct statements and confronting Germany’s enemies would be singled out for particular praise.<sup>95</sup> As would Pfitzner’s: assessing the new Pfitzner society in the month of its launch in 1918, the music critic Willibald Nagel cited Mann’s inaugural speech in order to proclaim the importance of victory for German culture ‘über kleinliche, schwache und nach fremder Art Schielende’.<sup>96</sup>

What the early post-war polemics of Mann and Pfitzner had done, ultimately, was prepare the ground for new developments in German music-political thought, and also to begin to populate this field with works and a vocabulary. In immediate response to Pfitzner’s polemic, the term *Impotenz* entered contemporary musical discourse as something of a slogan. As only one example, Karl Blessinger – a self-styled expert on ‘die musikalische Probleme der Gegenwart’ – titled his book of 1920 *Die Überwindung der musikalischen Impotenz*, and in doing so borrowed wholesale a swathe of Pfitzner’s key terms in proposing his own means of overcoming the apparent problem through a new masculine national music, purged of what he calls ‘die ostjüdische Invasion’, seen to be led by the Viennese and, in

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<sup>94</sup> Mann, *Betrachtungen*, p. 22. His emphasis.

<sup>95</sup> See Hübinger, pp. 63-64.

<sup>96</sup> Nagel, p. 260.

particular, Gustav Mahler.<sup>97</sup> This was yet another binary politics following Mann's lines: one of musical exclusion voiced in newly acute fashion, something that attracted supporters but also opponents, not least a series of anti-Pfitzner articles in the leading Viennese modernist periodical *Musikblätter des Anbruch*.<sup>98</sup> But when the same journal carried a review of the first performance of *Von deutscher Seele* that complained in one sentence of the politicization of Eichendorff through the cantata, yet immediately thereafter that 'dies Werk spricht nicht bloß zu meinem Wissen, sondern viel mehr noch zu meinem Empfinden', the victory was, in a sense, already handed to the advocates of a national *Stimmung* by means of musical feeling. Romanticism is not dead, its author goes on to confirm, and nor is the idea of the German: here is a song of the earth, he writes, not a universal *Lied von der Erde* like Mahler's late opus, but of the *German* earth, signalling (in a curious distorted echo of Nietzsche's *Geburt der Tragödie aus der Geiste der Musik*), 'die Hoffnung unserer Zukunft: Die Wiedergeburt des deutschen Geistes aus der deutschen Seele!'.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, another critic in the same issue

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<sup>97</sup> Karl Blessinger, *Die Überwindung der musikalischen Impotenz* (Stuttgart: B. Filser, 1920), p. 80.

<sup>98</sup> See Alban Berg, 'Die musikalische Impotenz der "neuen Ästhetik" Hans Pfitzners', *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, 2 (1920), 399-408, and Hugo Kauder, 'Gedanken und Betrachtungen zu Pfitzners Streitschrift', *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, 3 (1921), 69-72. See also the more measured approach of Hanns W. David, 'Betrachtung eines Musikalisch-Unpolitischen', *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, 3 (1921), 143-5.

<sup>99</sup> R. S. Hoffmann, 'Von deutscher Seele', *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, 4 (1922), 88.

declared *Von deutscher Seele* to be ‘eine triumphierende Bestätigung zahlreicher Thesen aus Pfitzners literarisch niedergelegter Ästhetik’.<sup>100</sup>

As much as they might have sung the pained swansong of German Romanticism, then, the ‘non-political’ *Betrachtungen* of Mann, coupled with the music of Pfitzner and the poems of Eichendorff, continued to resonate and build into the aftermath of the war. Through his ‘ironic’ conservative stance, Mann had articulated one of the chief problems of German cultural and national identity in the upheaval years of 1917-18: how to hold to what one now knew to be one’s foremost birthright, the rich Romantic legacy of the nineteenth century, while also accepting its apparent incompatibility with the incursions of European thought that had become similarly and simultaneously mobilized by those drawn to democracy. Yet this new awareness had also inspired Mann as a cultural creator and agitator, a student of the depths of the soul stirred by Germany’s richest Romantic legacy of all, music – as expressed not only by its musicians, but by those who felt, thought, and sought to conquer ‘musically’ in a far broader sense. This meant Wagner, but also Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Eichendorff – and one of the most dedicated heirs of all of these, Hans Pfitzner. Pfitzner’s activities of the war’s final years sounded a deep chord with Mann, an opportunity to indulge in the experience of music as a fundamentally national-political flow, with all the conflicted glories that that might entail, and the utopian, unreliable conservatism that it might bring to the surface. From that place, however, led distinct paths. Mann would ultimately, following the structures of his own binary logic, try to turn his keen cultural conservatism towards the support of the German Republic: in the 1922 essay of that name, he looked back on his *Betrachtungen* as ‘konservativ – nicht im Dienste des vergangenen und der Reaktion, sondern

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<sup>100</sup> Hermann Schmeidel, ‘Aus einer Besprechung der Berliner Uraufführung’, *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, 4 (1922), 89.

in dem der Zukunft; seine Sorge galt der Bewahrung jenes Stockes und Kernes, an den das Neue anschließen und um den es in schönen Formen sich bilden könne'.<sup>101</sup> In these beautiful forms he now included German democracy. Perhaps it was this final contortion that recommended him to the young Adorno and, in turn, underscored the resonances with Mann's work in the 1957 Eichendorff address and its own search for a forward-facing conservatism to challenge that of the bad status quo.

But another path was followed by other young Germans around 1918, those no less impressed by the thought and deed of Mann and Pfitzner. Guided by Pfitzner's early post-war writings like the *Impotenz* essay, the likes of Karl Blessinger, a self-proclaimed solver of 'contemporary problems', extended the binaries of Mann's *Betrachtungen* into the music-intellectual enquiry of the early 1920s, so that it now explicitly encompassed race, national insiders and outsiders, and the potent and the impotent in art, culture, and politics. In so doing they laid a groundwork, on which would be built more imposing fortresses of German nationhood, and from which further calls for utopian revolution would be issued.

### **About the contributor**

Nicholas Attfield is Lecturer in Music at the University of Birmingham. He is author of *Challenging the Modern: Conservative Revolution in German Music, 1918-1933* (Oxford University Press/British Academy, 2017), and co-editor of *Music, Modern Culture, and the Critical Ear* (Ashgate, 2017).

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<sup>101</sup> Mann, 'Von deutscher Republik', p. 113