

# MUSICAL DISCOURSE AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES IN HEBREW LITERATURE

Kenaz's *Musical Moment* and Shaham's *Rosendorf Quartet*

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*Abstract:* This article explores the role of musical discourse in shaping historical narratives in the Hebrew literature of Yehoshua Kenaz and Nathan Shaham. By referring to the rich reservoir of German culture and literature, such as Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, both Kenaz and Shaham uniquely come to terms with past events. Examples include the immigration from Europe to Palestine in the first decades of the twentieth century, World War II, and the War of Independence. My claim is that a dialectic model of aesthetics characterizes both authors' poetic employment of musical discourse in order to reflect upon cultural and political processes—for Kenaz, it is narrating the moments of strangeness and alienation inherent in processes of socialization and identification, such as the formation of the Zionist self, and for Shaham, it is documenting distorted realizations of sociocultural visions regarding life in the *Yishuv* and the State of Israel.

*Keywords:* culture, Hebrew literature, fiction, musical discourses, narratives, *Yishuv*, Zionist self

Aesthetic theories and discourses play a decisive role in the elaboration of historical narratives in various works of Hebrew literature. A specific aesthetic discourse, however, comprising musical structures and/or images, seems to have occupied many writers of Hebrew prose since the 1980s: Yehoshua Kenaz's *Moment Musicali* (*Musical Moment*, 1980), Abraham B. Yehoshua's *Molcho* (1987), Nathan Shaham's *Arba Be-teivah Ahat* (*Four in One Bar*, 1987), *Reviyat Rosendorf* (*The Rosendorf Quartet*, 1987) and *Tzilo Shel Rosendorf*

(Rosendorf's Shadow, 2001), Dan Tsalka's *Pulhan Horef* (The Rite of Winter, 1989), Gabriela Avigur-Rotem's *Mozart Lo Haya Yehudi* (Mozart Was Not a Jew, 1992), Yoel Hoffmann's *Christus Shel Dagim* (The Christ of Fish, 1991) or *Ha'shunra Ve-ha'shmeterling* (The Shunra and the Schmetterling, 2001), S. Yizhar's *Tzdadi'im* (Asides, 1996), and David Tarbay's *Stalker* (2004).

This partial list raises a number of questions: What are the functions of musical images and structures in Hebrew literature? Which narratological operations are used in activating musical intertexts? What are the cultural and political contexts of such activations? And, in addition, what historical conditions encouraged such phenomena in Hebrew literature? Do similar phenomena exist in pre-1980 literature in Israel? This essay attempts to deal with the first three questions by focusing on texts by Yehoshua Kenaz (1937–) and Nathan Shaham (1925–). Both authors poetically attempt to come to terms with past events, such as the immigration from Europe to Palestine in the first decades of the twentieth century, World War II, and the War of Independence, by incorporating elements from the realm of music. I claim that by either alluding to musical references and themes or by translating musical forms into narrative structures, they shape poetic modes of representing the past.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Kenaz and Shaham need musical discourse in order to convey the complexities of historical events.

A rich source of musical discourse for both authors is German literature, especially *Doktor Faustus* (Doctor Faustus, 1947) by Thomas Mann (1875–1955). This novel attempts to reconstruct the rise of National Socialism in Germany by intensive borrowing of musical patterns and images, and by alluding to different musicological discourses, such as those related to the First and Second Viennese Schools. In overlapping a composer's biography with events of German history, Mann was among the first authors to shape new modes of representing Germany's recent past, a representation which later authors reacted toward, either affirmatively or critically. I will thus try to show how a German novel that demonstrates thematic and structural activation of musical intertexts has become a dominant reservoir in the formation of cultural identities and historical narratives in Kenaz's *Musical Moment* (1995) and Shaham's *The Rosendorf Quartet* (1988).<sup>2</sup>

However, far from pointing to a dual romantic model that characterizes both authors' poetic use of musical intertexts, I intend to explore a dialectic model of aesthetics. The aesthetic-dialectic incorporation of musical discourses in these literary texts creates a unique mode of reflecting and commenting upon cultural and political processes: For Kenaz, it is narrating the moments of strangeness and alienation inherent in processes of socialization and identification, such as the formation of the Zionist self, and for Shaham, it is documenting distorted realizations of sociocultural visions regarding life in the *Yishuv* and the State of Israel.

## Dialectic of Aesthetics

Since 1945, German literature has been preoccupied with the question of representing the past. A major manifestation of this phenomenon has been the repetitive attempts by different authors to develop alternative modes for dealing with the events of World War II. Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947) has thus become a fruitful source for further developments in German literature. Much has already been written about the way Mann has managed to integrate music with literature (Windisch-Laube 2001: 327–342), especially in *Doctor Faustus* (Dahlhaus 1982; Lämmert 2001). Indeed, this novel explores poetic modes of documentation and testimony by shaping intertextual, semiotic and form-analogy relations between music and literature. *Doctor Faustus* narrates the history of Germany from the medieval period up to the middle of the twentieth century, culminating in the catastrophe of World War II. The novel includes two parallel narratives, a private biography of a composer, on the one hand, and a collective biography of the Germans, on the other.

Mann's work on the novel was partly influenced by his dialogue with the sociologist of music, Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969). At the time of writing *Doctor Faustus*, Mann read Adorno's manuscript *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (Philosophy of Modern Music, 1949), throughout which the author criticized the musical technique developed in the 1920s by Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951), a modernist composer and founder of the Second Viennese School. It should be stressed that for Adorno, Schoenberg's musical praxis, that is, his ways of solving technical problems, was socially relevant and proper for application in nonmusical, sociocultural realms (DeNora 2003: 19; Witkin 1998: 133–140). His disapproval of the specific musical system therefore had to do with what he saw as a repressive social apparatus. Adorno's sharp critique of the 'twelve-tone technique' demonstrated his philosophical recognition of a hazardous cultural process. More precisely, Adorno's concern with the danger embodied in the dogmatic and oppressive character of extreme rationalism, as elaborated in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Dialectic of Enlightenment, 1947), was incorporated into the field of (modern) music in his 1949 book: "The subject dominates music through the rationality of the system, only in order to succumb to the rational system itself. In twelve-tone technique the actual process of composition is returned to the basic realm of musical material. On the whole, the freedom of the composer undergoes the same experience ... thus the technique becomes the designation of the material, establishing itself as alien to the subject and finally subduing the subject by its own force" (Adorno 1994: 68).

This extract demonstrates the composer's paradoxical position. By describing him as one who attempts to dominate music by rational means, and yet who becomes dominated and subdued by its rationality, Adorno points to a cultural mechanism which he calls the 'dialectic of enlightenment'. Through this mechanism Adorno reveals a deep concern for the position of the modern subject, who becomes a victim of the civil and technological processes of progress.

This urge for domination that is transformed into something aggressively repressive is manifested in Mann's musical biography. Furthermore, the dialogue between Mann and Adorno with regard to *Doctor Faustus* also forms the basis for Adorno's drafts of some of its fictive musical pieces (Gödde and Sprecher 2002). Leverkühn, the novel's main character, composes these pieces after drawing inspiration from a pact with the devil that endowed him with creativity and discipline. These fictive compositions, which allude to Schoenberg's innovative music, reflect the destructive cultural processes that are contextually connected with the rise of National Socialism. In other words, Mann tells the "story" of how (aesthetic and political) avant-garde lost its freedom and its creative potential and became a restrictive system of oppression. Furthermore, it seems that the novel's affinity with Schoenberg's system is not only thematic, but also formal: "My book itself should be that which it deals with, namely a constructivist music," said Mann, indicating his quest to write literature in the way that a composer composes music (Mann 1989: 45). Similar claims encouraged various critics to look for specific musical forms in *Doctor Faustus*, as the attempt to analyze the novel's symmetric structure according to a twelve-tone composition shows (Wehrmann 1988: 120).<sup>3</sup>

Mann indeed employed such allusions and form-analogies in order to give aesthetic expression to the cultural and political phenomenon of fascism, emphasizing, however, its demonic, metaphysical aspects by introducing the allegoric pact with the devil.<sup>4</sup> The novel's dialectic incorporation of musical discourse may be viewed in this light as a search for alternative representation, one that reflects historical processes taking place in Germany prior to the catastrophe of World War II.

Variations of this dialectic are found in narratives of Hebrew literature that explore the premises and ideological applications of the Jewish national movement.<sup>5</sup> I will attempt to show how Kenaz and Shaham employ similar strategies of representing the recent past by alluding to Mann's literature. Their perspective is different, however, in the following ways: Firstly, as writers of Hebrew literature, they incorporate musicological discourse in the poetic formation of historical narratives that relate to Jewish existence in Israel. It is thus Israel and not Germany that stands at the center of their works; accordingly, events of World War II that conclude the historical

narrative outlined by Mann function as a point of departure in Shaham's narrative and as a reservoir of explicit and implied motivations in Kenaz's. Secondly, whereas Mann seems to present an absolute and somewhat total version of a coherent German narrative by overlapping the history of Western music with the history of Germany, Kenaz and Shaham present only phases of an ongoing narrative. Thirdly, by using fantastic elements in the elaboration of the Faustian myth and connecting it to music as the "representative of the German soul" (Mann 1977: 285), Mann produces a metaphysical perspective that is inherent in his coming to terms with Nazism; Kenaz and Shaham, by contrast, maintain a realistic frame of reference in their poetic exploration of sociocultural and political issues.

Similar to Mann, however, Shaham depicts how the avant-garde became an alienated and restrictive system by relating it with modern music. Kenaz, on the other hand, demonstrates this dialectical process by alluding to baroque, classic, and romantic musical forms. Shaham, like Mann, transforms musical forms into narrative structures (the polyphonic texture as well as the formal traits of a chamber piece), in addition to thematic employment of a wide range of musical intertexts, while Kenaz focuses mainly on the thematic elaboration of musical themes (shaping characters of musicians, describing musical pieces and renditions performed within the fictitious world, and alluding to musical references).

### Moments of Strangeness

*Musical Moment* by Kenaz (1995), one of four collected stories in a book of the same name,<sup>6</sup> describes the process of apprenticeship (Levi 1997: 129–130). The plot takes place during the years of the *Yishuv* in Palestine under the mandatory regime. Its main character, an adult narrator, reflects on his life, from the age of seven until adolescence, when he used to play the violin. Playing, however, soon became linked to neurotic phenomena manifested in physical symptoms such as blinking. Consequently, the young boy is forced by his parents to give up playing, and he only returns to it a few years later. The second encounter with the violin, however, lacks the primal, naive inspiration. The mature, disciplined playing is precise, yet lacks both sensitivity and emotion. After months of playing, the narrator, this time voluntarily, decides to relinquish the violin. Only then does he notice that the blinking disappears.

The following story, which is also the last in the collection, ends with the narrator and his schoolmates preparing themselves for military service. In the context of the whole collection, this process reflects the formation of the Zionist self, an integral component of a collective national narrative.

Relinquishing music in favor of militarism becomes, therefore, part of the affirmative ritual that is necessary for such formation. Kenaz's narrative, however, is more ambivalent, and is generated from his careful integration of aesthetic conceptions and perspectives with historical representations. It is thus not a simple replacement of one semantic field with another—sensitivity and humanity ascribed to 'music' versus dullness and dehumanized aggression ascribed to 'militarism'—but a dialectic process within which both components encounter and undergo a transformation.

*Musical Moment* presents two models that are metaphorically embodied in the character of a musician, a violinist: first, an aesthetic model that explores values of art such as 'beauty' and 'ugliness,' 'harmony' and 'disharmony,' and second, a political model, which calls into question the socio-cultural paradigm of the *Yishuv* in Palestine. Both models operate in the representation of past events and influence the elaboration of the story's historical narrative. I intend to show that these two models are based partly on the activation of musical intertexts from Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* and "Tonio Kröger," as well as from a short text by Gershon Shofman entitled *Ha-kinor* (The Violin).

The first literary allusion in Kenaz's story appears in the course of a musical description. The narrator describes a Correlli piece, *La Follia*, played by violin and piano in a students' concert at a Hebrew conservatory in Haifa:

The sadness of the music swelled through the hall and was heightened by the trills at the end of each phrase. Something mysterious transformed the feverish and apparently happy dance into a sort of a desperate yet majestic dirge. Uri's hand was full of controlled emotion and inner strength. Never in my life had I heard such beautiful playing, almost terrifying in its purity, provocative, utterly dispassionate, both *cool and ecstatic*. And as the rhythm accelerated, the tall boy in the white shirt, blue trousers and grown-up shoes appeared to be wrestling mysterious forces ... His concentration was so deep that it took him away from the platform and from the many eyes that were watching him, away from the piece itself, from its darkness, wildness, menace. He stood there, the paragon of an ordered world. (Kenaz 1995: 67; emphasis added)

The extract can be viewed as an aesthetic discourse that demonstrates the dialectics of order and disorder. Listening to the Correlli piece as a young boy accompanied by his parents, the narrator points to an opposition between the 'ordered world' created by the musician and the chaotic, accelerating rhythms of music. The violinist, Uri, represents virtues of harmony and balance, strength and self-confidence, in contrast to attributes such as darkness, menace, and the wildness ascribed to the flowing music. Uri is thus presented as a man of order who controls the rawness of wild, formless

rhythms, imposing technique and discipline on them. The musician, who embodies the confrontation between opposite powers, reverberates Friedrich Nietzsche's ([1872] 1994) insights on the origin of tragedy, namely, its "birth from the spirit of music."<sup>7</sup> However, whereas according to Nietzsche (ibid.) the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy manifests a fruitful tension between art's formal images (means of sublimation) and music's formless rhythm (uncontrolled, dangerous "raw energy"), Kenaz, like Mann, shapes this encounter within the sphere of music itself, by emphasizing, by contrast, its destructive consequences.

In Kenaz's story, *La Follia* embodies the same dialectics that Mann ascribes in his novel to Leverkühn's last musical piece, *The Lamentation of Dr. Faustus*. The lamentation and dirge dialectically express desire and anxiety, confidence and menace, sanity and insanity. Yet their radicalism, generated from extreme control of compositional (Leverkühn), as well as performative (Uri) capabilities, foretells unavoidable destruction, inherent in this dialectic aesthetics.

The two musical pieces, the "lament of such gigantic dimensions" (Mann 1980: 486) and the "majestic dirge" (Kenaz 1995: 67), the fictive (Leverkühn) and the historical (Correlli), represent systems of power, and may therefore be seen as allegories of political relationships. The connection between an aesthetic and a political model is heightened through Kenaz's use of the oxymoronic pattern, "cool and ecstatic" (1995). This term might indeed allude to Mann's story "Tonio Kröger,"<sup>8</sup> in which the protagonist explains, "Feeling, warm, heartfelt feeling, is always banal and futile; only the irritations and *icy ecstasies* of the artist's corrupted nervous system are artistic. The artist must be inhuman, extra-human" (Mann 1941: 26; emphasis added). As becomes clear in this story, Thomas Mann uses aesthetic images in order to question the essence of humanism.

In *Doctor Faustus*, however, it is modern music that functions as a central motif of a discourse on humanism. As mentioned above, Leverkühn acquires the creative capability to compose (modern) music based on a twelve-tone row under the conditions of a devilish contract: "Your life," Mann's devil concludes, "shall be cold—therefore you shall love no human being" (Mann 1971: 249). Leverkühn's innovative music breaks traditional forms by demonstrating new modes of expression. It does this, however, by radically employing restrictive means of regulation. The dialectic character lies here in music's promise of emancipating the individual, but which nevertheless undermines values of enlightened humanism. For Mann's protagonist, composing "true" music is only possible by estranging the emotions and by alienating the human; or, in other words, victimizing the composer, subduing the subject by its own force. Humanism thus succumbs to the power of a repressive system, as Mann interweaves the Faustian identity of the modern music with the emergence of fascism in Germany.

Kenaz does not deal with German fascism, and yet his poetic commentary regarding the formation of the Zionist self seems to explore similar dialectics. In combining the oxymoronic pattern of ‘cold ecstasy’ in the course of a musical description, Kenaz calls for activating codes of a political culture. His text is, therefore, loaded with radical discussions on aesthetics and politics that reflect the question of humanism by referring to immigrants’ identity processes. He introduces, for example, the character of an “outsider,” a “crazy beggar,” and “wild man” with “murderous red eyes,” who appears in the narrator’s fantasy while listening to Uri’s playing (Kenaz 1995: 67). This character’s ability to menace and terrorize lies precisely in his strangeness, of living outside the civil and national order—an order in which differences are eliminated in the course of adjusting to sameness, as well as through the process of identification.

While the Jewish national community indeed promised its subjects emancipation, the extreme enforcement of similarities on the non-similar, of sameness on selfhood, appears to be destructive. Kenaz represents these dialectics by associating strangeness and otherness with images of music. From the narrator’s viewpoint, the stranger becomes a horrifying allegoric figure that carries the mysterious, brutal, and yet fascinating features of the Dionysian rhythms which should be creatively sublimated. Yet when such a process of sublimation is enforced by means of absolute regulation, which is how the narrator experiences the Correlli piece, it turns into aggressiveness and self-destruction, as poetically manifested in the violent fantasy.

The rituals of eliminating differences (civil, territorial, and national) within a homogeneous Zionist narrative are also demonstrated by another literary intertext, *The Violin* by Gershom Shofman (1960). Shofman, a Hebrew author, interweaves acoustic images in writing about violin playing in the Diaspora. While initially expressing his disapproval of this instrument that creates creaking, unbearable sounds by the “rubbing of one body against the other” (i.e., bow and resonance-body), he later places his loathing within a historical context. With extreme sarcasm, Shofman writes about Jewish families in Europe who continued sending their children for lessons to German violin teachers when the Nazis were already sending the Jews to Dachau. Playing the violin is therefore associated with passivity, melancholy, and death. As Shofman writes: “The whole Diasporic-Ghetto nightmare screams out of these instruments” (ibid.: 186). In quoting a few paragraphs from Shofman’s text, Kenaz introduces this perspective, yet not without irony. The irony lies in his stereotyping the characters of Yoram’s parents (the narrator’s duo-violin partner) quarrelling about their son’s future. Whereas the mother wishes her son to pursue a violin career, the father has already decided on military activity. We have here the violin versus the “badge of the Palmach” (Kenaz 1995: 92), which may stand for



oppression and catastrophe as the images of the exilic narrative versus domination and independence as the images of the Zionist narrative.

The narrator, who “was simply disgusted by this shameful display in the street” (ibid.), compared it to a theatrical performance. Only in retrospect, while commenting on his response, does he reveal “love and compassion” instead of the “haughty contempt” he felt toward these characters as a spectator (Kenaz 1995: 93). Yet, at that early moment, despite the parodic polarity that characterizes the quarrel, it is precisely the father’s option that the narrator adopts. Shofman’s literary intertext thus reconstructs both realistic and aesthetic motivations for the narrator’s relinquishing the violin, for with this act he seems to complete a crucial phase of his adolescent development.<sup>9</sup> Finally he gains autonomy from his parents, as evidenced by the disappearance of the compulsive symptom: “One fine day I stopped scowling and the mysterious malady disappeared. I never understood what brought it on, and I could no more understand why it vanished ... then the stigma was gone, and quietude descended on my face forevermore” (Kenaz 1995: 93).

The image of “quietude,” however, also manifests a certain adaptation—the dullness of a face that has lost its expressive form, its otherness, succumbing to the regulative systems of a national community.

In summation, the whole process of reterritorialization seems to reach a conclusion according to which, the violin—a symbol of Jewish life in the Diaspora, has to be abandoned. And yet, the same violin that embodies the negative image of “being outside,” on the dark, ex-territorial side of the Zionist narrative, also participates in a critical discourse on dialectics, calling into question the paradigm of exile-negation. More particularly, the excluded musical instrument has been transformed into a writing instrument in Kenaz’s story, which is dominated by an *Ars-poetic* level: “I sit for hours by my typewriter, but my fingers are as sluggish as my mind” (Kenaz 1995: 77). In writing his story, Kenaz’s narrator comes to terms with early “painful moments,” a pursuit that nevertheless involves a critical view of collective as well as private processes of identification. Thus, the “quietude” that descended on the narrator’s face is also a poetic conclusion. By activating different allusions as well as cultural codes, while dialectically combining aesthetic and political models, Kenaz demonstrates the emptying process of an allegoric figure that has lost its human strangeness.

### **The String Quartet as a Model of Community**

In his novel, *The Rosendorf Quartet*, Nathan Shaham (1988) tells the story of four musicians who immigrated to Palestine in the 1930s after escaping from Nazi Germany. The narrator, a fictitious author called Egon Loeventhal, was

interned in Dachau, released, and immigrated to Palestine, yet returned to Berlin after the war. Loeventhal documents the musicians' life stories, combining four narratives within a polyphonic texture.<sup>10</sup> The novel comprises five sections, each of which presents a main character's 'voice', including the narrator's. The first four sections, devoted to the musicians, are entitled according to their role in the string quartet. The last section, devoted to the narrator, is entitled "The String Quartet." And indeed, the quest for transforming musical form into literature is emphasized by the narrator's repetitive metapoetic remarks, as well as by the novel's sectional structure and title. An inherent tension regarding the analogy between narrative and musical forms is revealed, however, as the polyphonic texture of the four autonomic voices and the text's 'chamber character' are threatened by the narrator's tyranny.

The chamber framework not only provides a poetic model, but also a social model of intimate community, an alternative to mass totalitarian and estranged systems: "Events in Germany have turned me into a chamber man. I want to compose prose without a plot, to write a novel without a dominant character, to live in a world without heroes. The story of four German Jews exiled to Palestine in 1936 with musical instruments in their hands is the only thing I can think about today" (Shaham 1988: 299). Shaham himself considered, more than once, the analogy between the structure of a string quartet and a specific model of community by emphasizing principles such as equality of rights, sensitivity toward the other, and aesthetic participation that transcends private interests (Shaham 1987: 79, 142). Written in the 1980s, *The Rosendorf Quartet* thus presents a chamber model that is also reflected in the novel's poetics, and in which each musician represents a different perspective concerning Zionism and life in Palestine in the 1930s and the 1940s: Rosendorf, the first violin, attempts to integrate European idealism, culture, and music with life in Tel Aviv; Friedman, the second violinist, who lives on a *kibbutz*, is immersed in socialist doctrine; Litovsky, the cellist, becomes a member of a subversive revisionist group before leaving for America; and Eva, the violist, who constantly criticizes the Zionist ideology, finally emigrates to England and marries a British officer who served in Mandate Palestine.

In assembling different, partially contradictory voices, Shaham's polyphonic narrative seems to confront the formal Zionist narrative by revealing its deceptive homogeneity. However, not only are fragments of imagined collective identity exposed within the five interwoven perspectives, but also fixed cultural conceptions, all of which ultimately keep the five selves blind to each other. Shaham shapes this alienation process by incorporating culturally loaded musical discourses, thereby shedding further light on the novel's historical representations.

An interesting example is a discussion on modern music, focusing on its innovative techniques that correlate with the modernist poetics of montage. In describing his colleague, Friedman emphasizes Eva's deep involvement with modern music from which she derives her identity: "Eva responded to modern music because it expressed her own feelings in an uncompromising way. She heard in it the urge to destroy accepted forms and to protest against the status quo, and, without being able to put her feelings into words, embraced this music, which expressed the disintegrated values, the fragmentation and disruption of the rhythm of life, and the blurring of the human image" (Shaham 1988: 123–124).

Friedman's description thus points to modern music's "authentic" modes of expression. In contrast to classical (or romantic) music, it negates deceptive representations of totalities and harmonies that disguise disintegrated and alienated social existence. However, this music that "finds support in apocalyptic prophecies" and in which Friedman "can hear the heartbeat of a time that has gone out of its mind" (Shaham 1988: 124), is transformed through his description into the very symbol of a world that has been emptied of its human values. Moreover, Eva herself, who is sympathetic to modernist composers such as Schoenberg and Berg, is strongly associated with the negative images of modern music.

Reconstructing Eva as an alienated, estranged body of music is also manifested in the visual metaphor used by Friedman: "Sometimes it seems to me that music surrounds her like a high wall. And modern music ... is the broken glass embedded in the top of the wall, there to prevent anyone from climbing over it" (Shaham 1988: 124). These aesthetic images activate certain cultural codes. On the one hand, they allude to a specific musicological discourse, such as Adorno's discussion on the progressive potential of modern music,<sup>11</sup> while, on the other, they invoke a reactionary vocabulary of another musicological discourse related to the controversy between two composers in Germany of the 1920 and 1930s: Busoni (1866–1924), who encouraged experimental, spontaneous music, and Pfitzner (1869–1949), who claimed to be Wagner's heir, and who identified modern music with negative images of art while connecting it with gender distinctions.<sup>12</sup> Pfitzner associated modern music with femininity as the negative pole of the constructed gender dichotomy, together with attributes such as strangeness, demonism and anarchy, chaos, abandonment, and seduction (Weiner 1993: 69–71).

Returning to *The Rosendorf Quartet*, it is thus not accidental that Eva embodies a dangerous, amoral seducer, a distant object of desire that one should be wary of. Moreover, what was implied in the previous extract becomes clearer in the following. From the narrator's viewpoint, Eva's infertility constitutes a metaphor for the destructive barrenness of inhumanity: "The world of our

times is a woman whose reproductive organs have been removed. Love is extended egoism. Our actions are absurd. Our failures are pointless. Patriotism is an illusion; language lies. All that exists is music—the last gasp of western civilization” (Shaham 1988: 335). Indeed, the narrator reacts toward the failure of “the world of our times” with an allusion to Western music as “the last gasp of civilization.” Yet his arguments also expose the limits of a conservative understanding of humanism by calling into question the fixed, deceptive constructions of gender relationships in culture as represented throughout the novel.<sup>13</sup> In this context, it is worth returning to *Doctor Faustus*, where the feminine character of Esmeralda, whom Leverkühn meets at the brothel, is associated with demonic and menacing attributes, and whose name functions as a basic motif of Leverkühn’s last musical piece.

Similar to Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, which also functions as an intertext in *The Rosendorf Quartet*, Shaham attempts to narrate the historical catastrophe of World War II by exploring musical discourses. First, as we have seen earlier, Shaham’s fictitious author, the narrator, chooses polyphonies as the structure and theme for his literary work. In light of the “events in Germany,” Loeventhal defines himself as a “chamber man” (ibid.: 23), yet needs German culture and music for demonstrating the loss of civilization and the decline of humanism. However, it is not the world of avant-garde and the traditions of the Second Viennese School, but rather the old school of classical (and romantic) music such as Beethoven and Brahms that serves as a reference for cultural redemption. And second, his historical account demands a “logical syntax” and clear conceptual thinking that would “return the sanity to Germany” (ibid.: 287). Within a poetics that “makes sense,” Loeventhal attempts to narrate the experiences of German emigrants in the *Yishuv* of Palestine while reflecting upon the catastrophic events in Europe; he thus believes that the right representation mode can be found in the world of classical forms, balanced harmonies, and beautiful melodies.<sup>14</sup> This motivation also explains his later antagonism to modernist poetic strategies, such as the montage technique, thereby hinting at Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*.<sup>15</sup> From his perspective, the montage is dangerous because it undermines logocentric forms and coherent methods of signification by representing heterogeneous fragments torn from their organicist contexts. By concluding the novel with an allusion to Beethoven’s *Great Fugue*, Shaham confirms Loeventhal’s motivation.

To sum up, while the novel’s five narratives presented in each section are interwoven, the narrator’s voice tyrannically hovers above them, imparting a pessimistic tone to the realization of the collective Zionist vision. The alternative horizon that has been opened with the ‘polyphonic promise’ (heightened by the sectional structure and narrator’s metapoetic remarks)

seems now to be closed, as the four autonomic voices become one: Of the four immigrants, only one continued to play in Israel, yet his existence too is one of compromise, “an eagle with a wounded wing, [that] has resigned himself to his fate and accepted the borders of this country, which were fixed in the armistice agreement, as the boundaries of his world” (ibid.: 356–357). Two members left for America and England, and the last, the most “loyal” Zionist, was killed in the War of Independence. In this sense, the intimate chamber framework failed to provide an alternative to the processes embodied in aggressive and alienated power systems. This conclusion also exposes the limitations of an aesthetic framework as a model of community. Nevertheless, due to the dialectic aesthetics reflected in the integration of musical discourses, the novel still provides the option of this community that has not been fully realized, based on values such as dialogue and joint creation.

### **Life in Israel, Past and Present**

In Shaham’s subsequent novel, *Rosendorf’s Shadow*, which takes place in Israel in the 1990s, Loeventhal struggles to find an adequate mode of representing the past, an alternative to historiography. Accusing the historians, who, with their obsessional search for facts have neglected the human subject, in contrast, he points to specific works of literature and music which still carry the traces of an already lost world (Shaham 2001: 204–205). Throughout Shaham’s ongoing work, the narrator represents a nostalgic vision of aesthetics in the elaboration of a historical narrative that also reflects on present life. It is not the fragmented nor the constructed, systematically regulated textures of modern music, but rather the harmonic forms of the traditional aesthetics that can enrich poetics with new modes of representing the past and thereby suggest desirable modes of life in the future.

In Kenaz’s story, it is not a specific musical style, but rather the musical pursuit as such that was abandoned in favor of social adjustment and collective pragmatism—only, however, to be rediscovered as it is transformed into the dialectic aesthetics of a storytelling. Thus, a critical variation of Adorno’s ‘dialectic of enlightenment’ appears, manifested first in a phantasmagoria of violence and a physical symptom (blinking), leading to the absolute negation of exile, and ending up with the controlled, retrospective poetic act (storytelling) which nevertheless acknowledges human gestures and shows its moments of strangeness by referring to different musical allusions as subversive flashes within the hermetic narrative.

In conclusion, both authors dialectically use musicological discourses to represent historical events. As I have shown, a major frame of reference

for shaping such discourses are dialogues as well as controversies from German culture and literature in the first half of the twentieth century. The authors' perspectives are different, however, as Kenaz and Shaham rework the dilemmas characterizing the immigration to Palestine and the complexities associated with the formative experiences of the Zionist self. Similarly, the different elaborations of these musical discourses by both Israeli authors produce different conclusions.

Ostensibly, *Musical Moment* ends with a determined act, that of relinquishing the "music," which comes to embody the concept of the Diaspora. And yet, the music returns as a poetic perspective, as a criticism of unavoidable processes of exclusion and identification, thereby reflecting on the process as it is, free from visionary aspects.

*The Rosendorf Quartet*, in contrast, ends on a frustrated note regarding the realization of the Zionist vision by acknowledging the decline of a musical world. The string quartet suggests a model for a social and political order whose realization has failed. By incorporating specific musical references, as well as by emphasizing the structural affinity to musical forms, Shaham reveals the unresolved tension inherent in the mechanism on which his novel comments. In this sense, both Kenaz's and Shaham's historical narratives are committed to dialectic aesthetics while exploring cultural perspectives that open a critical view on life in Israel, past and present.

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## Notes

1. On two aspects of the music-literary study, the thematic (also 'verbal music') and the formal (also 'music-like structure'), see Scher (1972).
2. In the text, I refer to the English editions: Kenaz (1995) and Shaham (1988), respectively.
3. Chapters 1–12 are analogous to the 'prime row' as chapters 13–24, 25–26, 27–48 are analogous to the retrograde, inversion, retrograde-inversion rows, respectively. However, this tendency was also strongly criticized for its metaphoric character (Osterkamp 2001: 325; Robertson 1993: 134; Windisch-Laube 2001: 334).
4. For a theoretical discussion of literary allusion in relation to other disciplines such as art and music, see Ben-Porat (1976: 107–108).

5. I refer mainly to constructed images that legitimate the Jewish immigration to Palestine in the twentieth century by affirming its cultural and political legacies. For a wider discussion, see Shaked (1993: 90–97) on the Zionist metanarrative and counternarrative.
6. This title alludes to six piano pieces by Franz Schubert (*Moments Musicaux*, 1823–1828), which demonstrate compositional freedom and enigmatic expression despite the use of traditional forms, such as the minuet and trio (no. 1, 6). The allusion to the romantic piano pieces invites a structural activation of formal traits (analogy between narrative and musical forms). This analogy, however, remains implied, in contrast to Kenaz’s intensive elaboration of musical themes and intertexts.
7. In his well-known essay, Nietzsche ([1872] 1994) speaks of the origin of ancient tragedy that emerged by endowing the Dionysian rhythmic flow with an Apollonian image within a process of artistic sublimation, without, however, restricting or exterminating one another. See also Heckman (1990).
8. Regarding this particular allusion, see Levi (1997: 190–191). On Mann’s protagonists of *Buddenbrooks* and “Tonio Kröger” as a model for Kenaz’s romantic protagonist, see also Shaked (1980: 122–123). Whereas Shaked emphasizes European literature’s dual model of beauty and evil or beauty and sickness, I attempt to highlight Kenaz’s activation of a different model of Mann’s poetics.
9. See Balaban (1982: 52–56) for an adolescence story in overcoming a crisis, as well as Shaked (1980: 123), who sketches a dichotomy between fantasy and reality—a full, sick, and rich childhood versus an empty, healthy, and dull adulthood.
10. In identifying the polyphonic texture of the novel, Bakhtin (1988) highlights the metaphoric relations between literature and music and its fruitfulness for sociocultural readings.
11. In the introduction to *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Adorno (1994: 19) claims: “Its truth appears guaranteed more by its denial of any meaning in organized society, of which it will have no part ... than by any capability of positive meaning within itself. Under the present circumstances it is restricted to definitive negation.”
12. Pfitzner’s 1920 book, *Die neue Ästhetik der musikalischen Impotenz* (The new aesthetics of the musical impotence), summarizes his arguments against Busoni and Bekker (1882–1937).
13. For more on the constructions of gender distinctions into restrictive hierarchical dichotomies as well as the methods of interfering such processes, see, for instance, Cixous and Clément (1986).
14. In this context, it is worth considering Shaked (1993: 346) on Shaham’s readable conceptual novel that is dedicated to social messages, relinquishing psychological depths, as well as metaphysical highs—as reflected in Loeventhal’s metaliterary remarks.

15. Mann (1989: 25, 27; see also Gödde and Sprecher 2002: 18) repetitively claimed to be using this technique in his 1947 novel, *Doctor Faustus*. Various scholars (Lämmert 2001: 87–88; Robertson 1993: 135–136), however, call this into question.

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