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Adorno and the Language of the Intellectual in Exile

Ana Baert

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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ADORNO AND THE LANGUAGE OF
THE INTELLECTUAL IN EXILE

by

ANA C. BAERT

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2019

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date

Martin Elsky

Thesis Advisor

Date

Elizabeth Macaulay Lewis

Executive Officer

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

Adorno and the Language of the Intellectual in Exile

by

Ana C. Baert

Advisor: Martin Elsky

Adorno's experience as an exile influenced his two works *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (1944) and *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life* (1951). These works embody the adversity Adorno wrestled with in his personal life and voice a quasi-indignant resignation to the notion of displacement as a natural yet mutilated human condition. I will analyze *Dialectic of Enlightenment* through the subjective, experiential lens of *Minima Moralia* thereby revealing the personal allusions to Adorno himself in his analysis of Odysseus as the prototypical bourgeois.

This thesis explores a biographical approach of the man who was known for his viscerocritical voice. I propose that the cultural diversity apparent in his bourgeois upbringing in post-Weimarian Germany, ironically, equipped him to confront his exile in America as a part of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research. This study zeroes in on Adorno's background, how it affected his language, and how this enabled him to cunningly navigate his exile.

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The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth

Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*

Introduction

There's an element of intrigue in exploring the life of the exile. How else do we understand that Hektor Rottweiler and Archibald the Hippopotamus were really pseudonyms for Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno—ultimately known as Adorno? The use of these names provides contrapuntal insight into the man whose life has provoked various reactions: from being seen as a high-brow elitist to simply a man with exceptional intellect whose insight engendered critical interpretation. Theodor Adorno's experience as an exile influenced his two works *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (1944) and *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life* (1951). The first work, published during the war in his exile in the US, is a comprehensive academic critique that focuses on the root causes of the deception initiated by intellectual trends promoted by the Enlightenment. The second work, published after his repatriation to Germany, is anecdotal and autobiographical thereby giving more intimate insight into the man who became known for his viscerally-critical voice. These works embody the adversity Adorno wrestled with in his personal life and voice a quasi-indignant resignation to the notion of displacement as a natural, yet tragic human condition. The latter post-exilic publication magnifies understanding of the first work published in exile. In other words, the later autobiographical "Reflections" illuminate the "Fragments" from the earlier analytical work. The first section of *Minima Moralia*, where Adorno divulges the "narrowest private sphere" of the "intellectual in emigration," reveals a personal correlation to his use of Odysseus as the archetypal bourgeois in Excursus I of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This intellectual biography traces the development in

Adorno's thought and shows how repatriation gave him direct insight on exile and displacement as a natural human condition.

This analysis exposes that Adorno, contrary to long-standing popular views, was not a distant, elitist intellectual pontiff. Recent biographies such as *Adorno in America*, *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*, and *Adorno: A Biography* argue he was much more integrated in American culture than previously believed. This thesis emphasizes that his societal assimilation had comparable characteristics to the cultural assimilation he experienced as a child. I propose that ambiguity and detachment in relation to his surroundings were present in all stages of his life, always caught between two poles, belonging and not belonging, thereby generating a constant personal dialectic. I will discuss his biographical background to demonstrate how this ambiguity was apparent in his childhood, in his pursuit of academia, in his membership in a philosophical circle whose members had similar ambiguous relations to their surroundings and continued even in his return to Germany. He was raised in such a way that set him apart in his native culture: the grooming of a prodigy was not an accidental phenomenon. Whatever discipline that kind of training demanded is comparable to any distancing he maintained as he was in exile and in his eventual repatriation. In this vein, there was an element of seclusion throughout his life, so much so that Adorno concludes in *Minima Moralia* that the only real home for a writer (obviously alluding to himself) is in his writing. And even this metaphysical home is temporary. Adorno is fully aware that his own philosophical findings, such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, are not meant to be invariable and static, but rather redemptive in their dialectical reality. This thesis will analyze *Dialectic of Enlightenment* through the subjective, experiential lens of *Minima Moralia* thereby revealing the personal allusions to Adorno himself in his analysis of Odysseus as the prototypical bourgeois. This study zeroes in on Adorno's upbringing, how it affected his language, and how this enabled him to cunningly navigate his exile.

Adorno is often misunderstood when the historical context of his writings and circumstances are not taken into full consideration. Ironically, his reductive formula of the dialectic demands continuous reevaluation. Curiously, his legacy as such, would forever promote humanity's need for critical thought he fought so hard to protect. His atonality was deliberate. He wanted to be the anvil of resentment to the jaded bourgeois. If readers force harmony in his writings they will fall prey, like the advocates of the Enlightenment and the bourgeois he critiqued, of mythologizing his works, thereby imposing a formula of totalitarianism (tonality) that, instead of understanding his works, lead us to place them in a nostalgic abstract where they lose their meaning.

Section 1: The Frankfurt Institute of Social Research – A Cultural and Intellectual Fusion

Adorno is commonly identified with the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research (also known as The Frankfurt School). The members of this intellectual group all shared the same kind of ambivalent, assimilated yet detached, social backgrounds. Like Adorno, they were all from middle or upper-class German-Jewish families. And like Adorno, they experienced a degree of ambiguity in rejection of their parental bourgeois upbringing. The Institute was the embodiment of a cultural and an intellectual fusion. The founder, Feliks Weil, fulfilled his vision of establishing a kind of independent think tank that would act as an internal and external societal invigilator. Since its establishment in 1922, the Frankfurt Institute became a metonym where its name took on a symbolic life of its own. Just the term, the “Frankfurt Institute,” would come to represent a new ideology defined by critical thinking. Disillusioned with the political situation in Germany, while experiencing the effects of post-war inflation and its detriment to the bourgeoisie, this unique group of intellectuals united to study the social circumstances and hope to effect change. They sought to remain as independent and unaffiliated as possible upon seeing that even academia and “spiritual leaders” had had their tentacles in the 1914 war effort, while “the majority of students too, were dominated by Nazi groups, long before society as a whole was overwhelmed by National Socialism” (Claussen 94). Adorno joined the Institute as a later addendum once the school was already in exile in the United States. His academic contribution would come to define much of the critical thought the institute represented. Most of all, Adorno’s life would embody the dialectic, critical thinking he advocated. His life was an example of an assimilated yet foreign entity, one who stayed within the academic parameters of the Institute yet used that scholastic platform as a venue to voice his philosophical creed. Ironically, through the experience of exile, Adorno as well as the members of the Frankfurt Institute exchanged one ambiguity of belonging for another.

The effects of WWI and the ensuing failure of the Wilhelmine society made the members of the Institute “acutely aware of suffering and the barbarism that human beings were capable of inflicting on each other” (Wheatland 5). Though it is crucial to see the Weimar Republic as a fundamental influence on the formation of the Frankfurt School, it is as vital to see the effects of exile in Switzerland and America. Exile, “like the Weimar period itself, represented a sharp break with the past that was accompanied by terrifying realizations, new hopes, the formation of new political commitments, and intellectual confrontations with new modes of thought” (Wheatland 6). It is also important to identify that the independent character of the school, besides being a deliberate tactic for safety amidst the surrounding political and cultural changes, also reflected the upbringing of the members of the Institute. The fact that their family backgrounds emphasized assimilation, implicates they left—or dissimilated—from something else, thereby pinpointing an underlying dialectic: their old Jewishness versus their new secularity. Evidently, their families had conformed to become integrated into the secular bourgeoisie implying that adapting anew in exile was a concept with which they were already familiar. In plain words, whatever had to be done legally and culturally so as to establish the Institute followed a protocol they had known since childhood.

Each member of the Institute had experienced the ambiguity of secular Jewish assimilation in Germany. The duality between old versus new world of the city of Frankfurt would characterize much of Adorno’s life. It’s as though he were born into a dialectic; a topic he would explore on various levels later in life. Historically, Jews were not granted equal status in Germany until 1871. There were finally no more Judengassen, or Ghettos, in Frankfurt. The increase of exposure in the community boosted their success in various fields such as business, art, music, the press, and medicine. Ironically, the added success, instead of acclimating the rest of the population, just fueled any remaining underlying anti-Semitic sentiment. Many Jews chose to secularize, primarily,

to integrate and be able to ascend to the middle and upper classes. In so doing they would face stigmatization from the Jewish community who saw the move as a betrayal and apostasy.

Consequently, the assimilation also reconfigured their social and professional networks, evincing a self-imposed dialectical way of life that forsook their old religious tradition and embraced the new bourgeois lifestyle.

Oscar Alexander Wiesengrund, Adorno's father, went outside of his religious camp by converting to Protestantism and marrying a Catholic woman, Maria Calvelli-Adorno della Piana. Theodor being an only child was contrary to Jewish (and Catholic) custom, where four or five children would have been the norm. Under the new assimilated tradition among the middle-class the growing trend was to have small families. Regardless of their new associations, the constant variable in Jewish families was their high regard for education and culture. Though by the end of the 19th century many Jewish people worked in a trade, there came a shift to the more academic careers. This defined the socio-political makeup of the men that would form the Institute for Social Research. Claussen proposes that "the tendency of young Jewish intellectuals to form a peer group may be linked to the loneliness of this first generation of only children, in contrast to both traditional Jewish families and non-Jewish middle-class ones" (81). This loneliness suggests that even the effort to assimilate maintained a degree of detachment. This new group of secular, Jewish academics was the fruit of a motley merger of cultural, religious, and professional transitions that were, inevitably, still defined by ambivalence.

Some of the original members to form the Frankfurt Institute were Feliks Weil, Carl Grünberg, Henryk Grossmann, Max Horkheimer, Julian Gumperz, Friedrich Pollock, Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin, and Leo Löwenthal. Weil, the actual founder, "came from a prosperous and highly assimilated Jewish family. His father, Hermann Weil, was an international merchant who made his fortune exporting grain to Europe from Argentina" (Wheatland 7). Though born in

Argentina, Feliks had been sent back to Germany for his education. “Like Weil and his friends in Frankfurt,” these original members all came from “highly assimilated Jewish [families]” (Wheatland 9). Kracauer, one of Adorno’s early mentors, had referred to himself and Löwenthal as ‘hybrids,’ caught between traditional Jewishness and a secularized present” (Claussen 63). This could be said of all the Frankfurt Institute intellectuals who constituted a community detached both from their parents and from the larger German community.

The group that composed the core of the Frankfurt Institute clearly did not come together because of religion motivation, especially with their focus on assimilation into German society, nor was the purpose of the Institute to fight anti-Semitism. The main impetus was to found an institution as a means to conduct social research to gain a better understanding of their society. *In Search of Jewish Communities* focuses on another unifying factor: the search for a sense of community, or *Gemeinde* and *Gemeinschaft*, among people who had any kind of Jewish affiliation. These communities were cemented by redefining the terminology of inclusion and using words such as “*Stammesgemeinschaft* (community of common descent) and *Schicksalgemeinschaft* (community or common fate). These emphasized ethnic rather than religious community (Brenner and Penslar x). The Frankfurt Institute did not have a written policy requiring its members to have a common ancestry though it is evident, since everyone involved was of Jewish descent to some degree, that it was a significant, unifying attribute, especially since it was the sole reason any of them would end up in exile. It certainly could have been a complete coincidence that the Frankfurt School had a kind of oblique Jewish identity, but many Jews had already seen the handwriting on the wall before 1933 and, therefore, sought to strengthen any common cultural ties regardless of their secularity. The intellectuals of the Frankfurt School were knit together by more than their cultural or demographic background; their ethnic identity coincided with their political and social

creed. “What [united] them is their belief that the bourgeois society, with all its hopes of emancipation, had come to an end” (Claussen 90).

The most important aspect of this founding group was its resolve to think critically and immanently in the sense that they spoke from experience within their own group, not as outsiders. Their critique of bourgeois life “comes not from outside but from the interior of bourgeois life” (Claussen 85). As assimilated insiders they were committed to honest, though seemingly harsh, critique of bourgeois society. For instance, Adorno would single out a critic such as Kierkegaard who, in his opinion, did not want to see the bourgeois world for the failed system it really was. Culturally speaking, the Weimar era from before 1914 seemed to continue regardless of the obvious effects of war and inflation. This bourgeois cultural façade would generate a new group of social critics such as Adorno, Bloch, Lukács, Kracauer, and Benjamin who were ready to dissect the ethos. Ironically, everyone in this group was raised in the bourgeois environment they would be critiquing. No matter what philosophical positions they would adopt, their bourgeois upbringing would always be an integral part of their ambiguous identity.

Part of the ambiguity involved the cultural prejudice of the newly assimilated generation towards Eastern European Jews immigrating to Germany. In light of the communal sentiment of Jewish people towards, more than anything, a common ethnicity or descent, it is interesting to note that “Adorno is not known to have evinced any interest in Jewish affairs during the 1920’s, was not attracted to the theoreticians of the Jewish cultural renaissance, and was not involved with any explicitly Jewish organizations” (Jacobs 55). Jacobs provocatively states that when Adorno was a young man, “he had shared the prejudices of many Germans – and German Jews – against East European Jews” (Jacobs 55) As ironic and even hypocritical the idea of anti-Semitism among Semites sounds, it can be understood—though not condoned—if put within its context. In Adorno’s case, it would be safe to assume this preconception came from his assimilated yet protective

upbringing. Leo Löwenthal, in relating his relationship with the Adorno family said, “Naturally, I knew Adorno’s parents well, also his aunt Agathe” (Löwenthal 63). Nonetheless he adds that temporarily his “relation to his parents was disturbed by a dissonance perhaps not uncharacteristic for the history of assimilated German Jews ... Oscar Wiesengrund told his son that Leo Löwenthal was not welcome in his house as long as he had something to do with Eastern European Jews” (Löwenthal 63). Löwenthal attributed the dissonance to a common “German-Jewish middle class, and particularly upper middle class” mentality of that time. Adorno’s family was like many other German Jews who had followed a careful path to integration in order to protect their physical, cultural, and economic well-being. This explains Oscar Wiesengrund’s reluctance to allowing any outsider into their home that had, or could potentially have, any kind of political associations that would threaten their much-coveted household peace. How could he possibly have felt threatened by other Jews? Like Löwenthal expressed without any resentment, Oscar’s hesitancy must be put in its historic context.

To manage the influx of more than two million Eastern European Jews passing through Germany to migrate West between 1868 and 1914, German leaders imposed new administrative tactics to discourage Eastern European Jews from coming and to deter native Germans from welcoming them. The leaders “pictured eastern Jews as beggars, parasites, revolutionaries, and disease carriers ... the highest Imperial and state officials sanctioned the exceptional treatment of alien Jews, ordered the harassment and expulsion of Eastern Jews, and regularly defamed the newcomers” (Wertheimer 1-2). Such harassment stoked the anti-Semitic fires and led to the eventual loss of equal rights for the Jews. Already in 1912, German leaders depicted Eastern European Jewish immigrants as “fully alien to German Jews by virtue of their customs, outlook, and way of life. They belong to an entirely different, and comparatively inferior, culture” (Wertheimer 462-463). It is apparent that Oscar’s resistance to incorporating anyone into

Theodor's formation who had anything to do with the new wave of immigrants was more of a desire to stay uninvolved in the political aspect of the controversy. The fact that Adorno was not involved in any specifically Jewish organizations does not hint at anti-Semitism on Adorno's part, especially with a father of Jewish origin and the fact that his future wife, Gretel, also had Jewish heritage. This kind of reservation on the part of the Wiesengrunds is a typical example of the duality of Adorno's upbringing—assimilated but reticent.

This deliberate detached mentality was a way to function legally, without interference, and stay focused on his academic goals—an approach all members of the Institute were familiar with since childhood. Each had a similar bourgeois upbringing: “a protected childhood in the period of Wilhelminian normality; the experience of war, both at the front and on the home front; an enthusiastic welcome to the fall of the monarchy; and disappointment over the failed attempts at revolution (Claussen 69). Though raised in a protected environment, and encouraged to pursue academia, Adorno began to use his critical mind vis-à-vis the fluctuating political conditions and his disdain for the effects of nationalism during WWI. Like many other anti-war youth, he could not understand how so many intellectuals and spiritual leaders would actually support the war in 1914, or how “[s]cholarship placed itself in the service of war” (Claussen 66-67). Felix Weil provided the main impetus amidst this political, cultural, and economic setting, to found the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt University on June 22, 1924. Born in Argentina, Weil's status as a foreigner prevented this benefactor from any political involvement in Germany. Interestingly, this element would set a precedent for the other members of the institute where all future Critical Theorists were also expected to refrain from any political association. Regardless of its avowed apolitical position, the Institute would come under much scrutiny at various times for suspicion of introducing Marxism at the Frankfurt University. Felix Weil and his father wanted the institute to remain independent and controlled by a Society for Social Research; free from any

political intervention or from the Faculty of Economics and Social Science. The fact that the Institute could use the Frankfurt University as an academic affiliation was extremely unusual since most traditional scholastic establishments refused any kind of new cultural initiative. The generous financial backing from Weil guaranteeing its independence and the apolitical nature of the institute were most likely the elements crucial to facilitating its establishment.

The Weils chose Kurt Albert Gerlach as its first director because, besides common ideological grounds, he held a professorship at the university of Frankfurt. However, his directorship was cut short by his sudden death at only thirty-six years of age. They then chose Carl Grünberg, a famous Austro-Marxist, as its new director, while Weil and his friends designed various parts of the curriculum and ran a left-wing publishing house within the building. Grünberg's main drive was to use the Institute as a basis from which to research the society, "to better [comprehend] classical Marxism and the class struggle that were at the heart of German Communist politics during the years of the Weimar Republic" (Wheatland 11). Two years later on January 24, 1924, after Grünberg got unexpectedly ill, Max Horkheimer became the director. Some questioned why Weil would change the type of leadership and place someone whose main focus was the study of philosophy in charge of an institute dedicated to social research. Historians propose a possible explanation could be Horkheimer's obvious lack of political ties, especially at a time when the Institute was suspected of having Communist affiliations. Horkheimer's deliberate ambiguity was the perfect fit for the Institute's politically neutral position.

The main purpose of the Frankfurt School was to implement an interdisciplinary approach to Critical Theory. In his inaugural address, Horkheimer announced that the Institute would engage in research of "current philosophical problematics" conducted by an amalgamation of "philosophers, sociologists, political economists, historians, and psychologists" (Jacobs 2). These participants would always keep "the big picture" in mind as they combined their philosophical

topics with “the finest scientific methods, to transform and to make more precise these questions as the work progresses, to find new methods” (Jacobs 2). The goal would not be to produce specifically positive or negative answers: “instead, the philosophical questions themselves are dialectically integrated into the empirical scientific process” (Bronner and Kellner 32). Hereby, Horkheimer spelled out the school’s integrated philosophy. By invoking social critics from various academic disciplines the school established a prototypical, in-house system of checks-and-balances. This dialectical integration of “philosophy and science to develop a comprehensive theory of modern society” reveals a Hegelian concept of a system that is constantly changing in composition as ideas are posited against each other, thereby defining its critical basis (Wheatland 1).

The Institute’s first official topic of research was the German working class during the Weimar republic. They would study the effects of capitalism and mechanization and how this change affected relationships in the working class, as per the Hegelian master-slave dynamic. It is interesting to note that this first study was deemed unsuccessful “because the results showed widespread passivity and a complete lack of class-consciousness with total inertia toward any revolutionary attempts (Wheatland 28).” At that time, they didn’t know these findings would be important later on in studying the development of Nazism. The second main project was the Institute’s journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, with Leo Löwenthal as its editor. This work also demonstrated the Institute’s commitment to eclecticism with writings from various disciplines in each publication. For instance, one edition could have an essay by Horkheimer on philosophy, and essay by Fromm on psychology, an essay on economics by Pollock, and an essay on music by Adorno, revealing a “shared commitment to critical reason, the Hegelian dialectic, and the writings of young Marx” (Wheatland 27). These early published works give us insight into the beginnings

of, what would be known as, Critical Theory of society and how the writers changed and developed their perspectives and language over time.

The Institute for Social Research's first major transformation occurred once the Nazi regime seized power on January 30, 1933, and therefore moved within a month to Geneva, Switzerland. This circumstance would be an instant proving ground for the adaptability of the group to maintain its apolitical academic status yet navigate the duality of a political exile in a so-called neutral country. The ability to relocate so suddenly could only happen due to Horkheimer and Pollock's foresight, once they sensed the dangerous political shift, and moved the Institute's financial holdings out of German banks and shipped almost all the books out of Germany during the months prior. They certainly did not foresee the extent of the upcoming terror, but their prudential steps enabled the Institute and its members to survive the upcoming exile. The new headquarters in Geneva became the *Société Internationale de Recherches Sociales*. However, even there, the precarious nature of the move was evident: the Swiss would only grant temporary visas not only because of adjacent Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but also because of the Swiss attitude towards Jewish refugees. In the name of neutrality, the Swiss government allowed their country to be open only as a transitional domain for a limited number of Jews. The Swiss would eventually (a few years later) convince the German government to implement the stamping a "J" on their passports to facilitate the process of denying Jewish refugees (Gross 17). Horkheimer was the only member of the Institute in possession of Swiss residency while all others only had temporary status. Even with the adequate paperwork, whether permanent or not, the fact remained that the members of the Institute were all of Jewish descent and, therefore, remained a potential target. The Institute did establish a small outreach in London and managed to move its publishing connection from Germany to Paris. However, in view of the spreading threat of Nazism and Fascism in all of

Europe, Horkheimer searched for a way to ensure the safety of the Institute preferably with some kind of affiliation with a prestigious academic institute like they had in Frankfurt.

In Geneva, the first topic of research for this newly exiled group was how authority affected the European family. This study would have its butterfly effect across the Atlantic Ocean in New York City. Horkheimer and Fromm wanted to analyze if unemployment affected the traditional family configuration, the shift from a patriarchal family structure to a more matriarchal configuration, and the possible psychological effects of the cultural change. At that time, Columbia University was trying to revamp the image of its fairly new sociology department and change its common perception as a social science to a more scientific field. The “Memorandum on the Social Science Needs of Columbia University” written during 1928-29 patently stated “Research of a *truly scientific nature* in the social sciences in America is far from being what it should be expected to be. The recent recognition of realizable possibilities in quantitative measurement puts the issue squarely up to universities” (*Samuel McCune Lindsay Papers*). Wheatland demonstrates three conditions present in Columbia University that would create the perfect circumstances to want to welcome the Frankfurt Institute: the overall waning interest in social science, the need to use quantitative research methods to validate the scientific quality of sociology, and the economic Depression that had immobilized the university’s finances. Robert Lynd, an American sociologist and professor at Columbia University at the time, was already known as a pioneer for the use of social surveys in research, and for his books about Middletown, where he studied the conditions of the working class and the effects of an increase in leisure time (Peterson and Simonson 61). Lynd was extremely drawn to Fromm’s study of economic effects on the family since his own interests were in how the Depression would affect the American family structure, which he considered to be the most important social unit. Lynd saw the value of these German researchers and presented their holistic approach to the American patrons. He introduced the Institute’s vision of “a theory of

present society as an integrated and moving body,” and their distinct philosophy of research as a “unifying principle that would differentiate the work done from a mere description and enumeration of facts, and would guard it at the same time from the danger that threatens every abstract theory,—namely, of failing when put to the test of practical application” (Wheatland 58). The members of the Frankfurt Institute desperately needed refuge and the sociology department at Columbia needed intellectual reinforcement. In 1934, the Frankfurt Institute joined Columbia University and moved to 428 West 117 Street in Morningside Heights, NYC.

In 1938, Theodor Adorno, who had been pursuing his PhD from Oxford University in London, joined the Frankfurt Institute in America upon the request of Horkheimer to become the Institute’s music expert. That was the same year of Kristallnacht when the true horrors of the Holocaust were just coming into effect; the destruction of Jewish homes, hospitals, schools, synagogues, while hundreds of Jews were killed, and thousands sent to concentration camps. The following year would mark the beginning of World War II, followed by The Holocaust 1941-45. The reception of the “unwilling émigrés from Hitler’s Germany” in New York City was ambivalent from the start ...They charted an uncertain course from isolationism to assimilation and in the process became an intellectual phenomenon—the so-called Frankfurt School” (Wheatland xv, xvi). Wheatland’s narrative of the Frankfurt exiles focuses on the “transatlantic history of ideas,” or the intellectual fusion of the Horkheimer Circle and American academia. However, the coming together of two intellectual worlds was not an automatic process. “This process of assimilation ... was not easy for the members of the group. It was also not absolute” (Wheatland xix). Though this group of exiles was welcomed to the United States, their displacement was not an easy transition. America had strict immigration policies, such as the Immigration Act of 1924, that limited the number of Jewish refugees. In fact, even Columbia University had a quota as to how many Jewish faculty members it could employ (Wheatland 89). They were welcomed but, as revealed in more

recent biographies such as Jenemann's, were under strict surveillance. Though in the 1960's Martin Jay adamantly defended the relationship of the Frankfurt Institute with Columbia University as being purely academic, there were still underlying doubts as to the integrity of the association. This academic fusion occurred not only when the Führer was establishing his Third Reich, but also when the United States was investigating Communist activities forming the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1938. Even as late as 1980, Lewis Feuer published an article claiming the coalition was much more politically and financially motivated. He believed the intellectual association was a front for Communist affiliations. In an interview with Habermas, Herbert Marcuse explained that relationships with any kind of political group whatsoever was "strictly forbidden ... Horkheimer insisted [they] were guests of Columbia University, philosophers, and scholars. Any organizational ties could have shaken the Institute's precarious administrative foundation" (Wheatland 72-73). Although Wheatland, among many authors, holds to the Institute's academic motivation and purpose, and shows understanding of the stress and suffering of the political exiles, he berates the Horkheimer Circle for not taking advantage of the opportunity to interact with the New York intellectuals—another avant-garde group of (mostly) Jewish academics—of the time. To him, these two groups of intellectuals both employed their "dialectical imaginations to symmetrical sets of interconnected issues such as Marxism, alienation, conformity, mass culture, aesthetic theory, modernism, and totalitarianism" (Wheatland 99). Nonetheless, assimilation into the new American culture with its undercurrent of political paranoia was not easy for these men who had just left their volatile homeland arena. "The refugees from Germany carried heavy baggage that created rivalries among them and confounded American hosts who expected the emigres 'to shift rapidly from the old to the new context of problems'" (Wheatland 200). Horkheimer expressed his group had anticipated a "future of 'splendid isolation'" but instead, found that "American exile required a markedly different mode of existence"

(Wheatland xvi). This new existence would embody a dichotomy of “cooperation, as well as conflict; and assimilation, as well as misunderstanding” (Wheatland xvi). The experience of exile was a heightened version of the ambiguity the members of the Institute had been familiar with back in their homeland.

Section 2: Adorno and the Biographical Question

Adorno despised conventional biographies calling out their authors as “professional gravediggers.” Yet Adorno aficionados continue to produce biographical works. Therefore, his decree demands interpretation just like his other deliberately caustic comments. He explained that he preferred for readers to focus on his writings instead of incidents in his life. True to his philosophical convictions, he valued the dialectic, or “interplay,” between his work and its “historical context, i.e., what he called the forcefield consisting of historical situation of the authorial subject, his life and his oeuvre” (Müller-Doohm xii). Therefore, it is safe to assume that any modern biographers, including this thesis, presumes to have an understanding of Adorno’s forcefield. Like the modern approaches of Claussen, Müller-Doohm, and Jenemann, this biographical study of Adorno contextualizes his works thereby showing that the incipient state of exile throughout his early life forms a continuity rather than discontinuity with his actual exile. However, this thesis uses Adorno’s own biographical writing, *Minima Moralia*, to shed light on his academic work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This approach focuses—specifically—on the language of the exile and demonstrates how it discloses personal allusions even within his academic work.

Martin Jay was one of the main authors to put Adorno on the American academic map with *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (1973); he later also wrote the biography, *Adorno* (1984). Jay and other authors such as Claussen and Müller-Doohm, each devoted a substantial portion of their life works to Adorno and wrote biographies with the intent to honor a man who, ironically, despised that exact genre. Each author included an informal disclaimer in their work acknowledging how they knew Adorno would have cringed at the very idea of a book about himself. In *Adorno* (1984), Jay admits right from the first sentence that Adorno “would have been appalled at a book of this kind devoted to him” (11); in *Theodor Adorno: One Last Genius* (2003), Claussen declares that a history of

Adorno which “ignores his cutting criticism of the biographies of geniuses cannot be written in good faith” (2); and in *Adorno: A Biography* (2003), Müller-Doohm recognizes in his preface that a biography of Adorno “lays itself open to the objection that he had no liking for this genre” and had “grave reservations about the wisdom of exploring writers’ lives in order to discover the key to their artistic or philosophical works” (xii). In contrast, Simon Jarvis in *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (1998), and David Jenemann in *Adorno in America* (2007), unapologetically published their take on Adorno without any authorial disclaimer. Perhaps they wished to communicate they *really* understand him because their works claim to demystify all previous mystification of Adorno and emphasize the importance of still reading him today. It is interesting to compare these biographies with Leo Löwenthal’s first-hand insight in *Theodor W. Adorno: An Intellectual Memoir* (1987), since he knew him personally for so many years. He too attests to the grave misinterpretation of the man. Of course, it is necessary to listen to the gainsayers such as Lorenz Jäger as well, though his demystification is more of an exposé of a life he believed ended in failure. And though Jäger’s *Adorno: A Political Biography* coincided with the works by Müller-Doohm and Claussen, all published around Adorno’s centennial (2003), the main modern consensus is to reconsider the life of a man that was too often misunderstood.

Jay, a staunch advocate of Adorno’s works and who authored various works about him, attests that Adorno was deliberately distant and unintelligible. It almost seems like Jay relishes in being Adorno’s demystifier even though he concedes that Adorno himself “would have had a principled objection to any attempt to render his thought painlessly accessible to a wide audience” (Jay, *Adorno* 11). Jay embarks on an elaborate explication of the man who, according to his earliest translators, were “Translating the Untranslatable” (Jay, *Adorno* 12). Even though Jay begins his treatise acknowledging that Adorno demanded “not mere contemplation but praxis” of his audience, it would be safe to deduce that this biographer demands the same participation from his

readers. Jay's approach is a praxis of Adorno-on-Adorno especially when his biography is defined by a formulaic approach that applies Adorno's metaphors of the "force-field (*Kraftfeld*)" and the "constellation" to his own works. The force-field, according to Jay, was a "relational interplay of attractions and aversions that constituted the dynamic, transmutational structure of a complex phenomenon," whereas the "constellation" signified a "juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle" (Jay, *Adorno* 14-15). Jay breaks down his formula into five points, or "stars," in the constellation by which to interpret Adorno's works. Furthermore, Jay holds to the view that Adorno had "no love for American culture, a prejudice that he never really overcame" (Jay, *Adorno* 34). He even claims that Adorno "left his exile home for good in 1953 and never looked back" (Jay, "Adorno in America" 120).

In contrast to Jay's more analytical work, Detlev Claussen and Müller-Doohm present holistic biographies of Adorno. Their biographies emphasize the cultural aspects that surrounded Adorno from birth or, what Claussen termed, a "paradoxical modernity." They want to make the context wherein Adorno was born and raised clear so as to discredit some of the previous popular assumptions that Adorno was a secluded, intellectual mandarin. In his lifestyle Adorno did adopt a certain distancing, at first enforced by his parents and subsequently independently. However, this detachment begs interpretation just as the upbringing of any prodigy demands perspective. Claussen's biography of Adorno, which at times crosses over into a quasi-biography of Germany, labels Adorno as "One Last Genius." This is particularly ironic since Adorno despised popular biographies—specifically of geniuses—and referred to their authors as "professional gravediggers of the 'Culture Industry'" (Claussen 2). According to Adorno the term genius had been so misused that the only way to "salvage" its use was to strip it "from its crude equation with the creative subject, who through vain exuberance bewitches the work of art into a document of its maker and

thus diminishes it” (Claussen 2). However, since Adorno’s good friend, Horkheimer, referred to him posthumously as a genius, Claussen takes that lead and justifies the brazen use of the term in the title of his biography. One cannot overlook that in claiming Adorno is the “one last genius,” Claussen is also implying there will be no other. Another source that carries just about as much academic weight as Horkheimer’s explication of Adorno would have to be Löwenthal’s *Theodor W. Adorno: An Intellectual Memoir*, most obviously because they were also contemporaries and part of the same Frankfurt Institute. The first four words of this memoir proclaim, “Adorno was a genius.” Those who knew him well were definitely aware of Adorno’s personal contention with the term; consequently, their use thereof stands out as very deliberate and significant—even a bit arrogant. It’s as though the writers who claim to know him best, whether personally or posthumously through his works, are those who vaunt the right to use the words “genius” and “biography” (or “memoir”), regardless of what Adorno himself said. Their use of these terms implies a need to be antagonistic—perhaps in Adorno’s atonal vein—so as to justify the man and his works.

Claussen also dedicates a handful of pages to explaining Adorno’s disdain for “kitsch biography” based on his “fierce criticism of the bourgeois world and its religion of art” (2-3). Claussen presents proof of Adorno’s opinion of the vulgarity of biographies by citing Goethe who believed such genre was “nearly impossible” since it demanded “the individual know himself and his century,” and by citing Freud who in 1936 wrote that “whoever becomes a biographer commits himself to lies, dissimulation, hypocrisy, whitewashing, and even to concealing his own lack of understanding, for biographical truth is not to be had, and if it were, it would not be usable” (4-5). Regardless of these contrary sentiments, Claussen evidently still felt justified in producing the biography and uses Adorno himself as an example of someone, he claims, ended up charmed by the production of biographies. Claussen’s proof is the writing of *Minima Moralia* with the

“programmatically subtitle” *Reflections from Damaged Life* (6). However, simply using *Minima Moralia* as an example of an (auto)biographical work neglects to consider that Adorno, true to his personal style, wrote in a deliberately contrary way to whatever would be considered the norm for that genre. If Adorno chose to write anything autobiographical it would have to embrace a dialectical—atonal—prose so as to engage the reader and force him/her into an intellectual praxis. *Minima Moralia* is the definitive go-to work that all biographers gravitate to in order to get any kind of personal insight on Adorno’s life. This might seem obvious since, even though Adorno does not call it an autobiography, he designates his book as “personal reflections” of his own “damaged life.” The more recent biographies, such as those by Claussen and Müller-Doohm, offer newer insight not only because they often reference *Minima Moralia* and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but also because they were written at a time when more access to Adorno’s correspondence was finally available. Both authors extensively use the personal letters as a centripetal literary force in their works. Müller-Doohm, especially, peppers his narrative with correspondence, published and unpublished, from Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Alban Berg, Paul Celan, Thomas Mann, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, Elisabeth Lenk, Ernst Krenek and even Adorno’s parents. However, as late as 2005, access to all letters, such as between Adorno and Kracauer, were still not disclosed to the public. In composing their various biographies these writers, even those who disagree (to a certain extent) with his principles, propose a vindication of their “genius.”

This biographical analysis focuses, specifically, on Adorno’s exile and how this life experience affected his writings. Exile, its meaning has more to do with uprooting and exodus; its connotation bears a heavy emotional baggage, almost like a scarlet letter “E.” Curiously, within the exilic community, there existed an unwritten hierarchical code. Lukács, in *History of Class Consciousness* (1923), analyzed the meaning of the new intellectual as an emerging scholarly pattern. His theory reassessed the cultural position of the academic and attributed the status “that

had once placed philosophers at the side of kings ... the new intellectual [moved] into the center of world history” (Claussen 84). The academic’s vocation was then esteemed a “superior discipline,” and thereby became “part of an idealized global party that must be viewed as the spearhead of a revolutionary turn of events” (Claussen 84). Lorenz, in her study of Jewish women writers in exile, proposed that there were “rifts among emigres, caused in part by the widespread assumption that literary exile was a political matter and thus nobler than exile that was merely Jewish” (Lorenz 227). It is safe to state that Theodor Adorno arrived in America as part of the upper echelon of literary exiles. For that matter, so did all those associated with the Frankfurt Institute. They certainly didn’t arrive as part of the émigrés that didn’t know where their future home would be or where they would find employment. Adorno arrived as an expected expatriate knowing he had a place to live and having been offered a respected position of employment, not just as part of the Frankfurt Institute but also under the prestigious umbrella of an Ivy League university.

In this vein, it could be stated that the attention surrounding Adorno had something to do with the intellectual nature of his exile, making him the curious and sometimes exotic subject of various biographies. The intrigue of the proverbial “E”—for exile—drew the attention of many writers, although that in itself is not an unusual premise. Many, such as writers of the Lost Generation (for instance, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, E.E. Cummings), or poet Pablo Neruda, added a certain mystique to their narratives because of their exilic element. Even earlier cases such as Victor Hugo (1851), Dante (1320), or further back to Aristotle, Ovid, and Horace all have this added element of intrigue because of the works they produced under the constraint of being expats forced away from home. The mystique prompts specific questions: did these famous intellectuals produce their work purely because of their intellect and as a product of their culture? Or did circumstance—exile—place them in a sort of critical vacuum that constrained them to write as a means of survival? In other words, would they have produced the same quality of work if they

had not been uprooted physically and emotionally? That's where the subject of exile holds its clout, because there is something fascinating about one who prospers in the middle of adversity. Herein, the biographical element lures an audience: we are drawn to narratives where the archetypal underdog comes out victorious. What distinguishes this type—or archetype—of intellectual exile is that they left a paper trail. In their case and, specifically Adorno's case who published numerous academic works and wrote an abundance of personal letters, it is possible to read his own thoughts to try to demystify the impetus behind his academic works.

Biographical views on Adorno continue to develop in their perspectives and approaches as newer primary sources are discovered. The delay between when he published his works to when he finally gained national and international recognition had to do with the lack of translations or with the inadequacy of the translation of his works. Language and translation were (and remain) an issue for the Anglophone world because of its lack of familiarity with “the tradition of classical German philosophy whose language and idioms form the very element of Adorno's thought” (Jarvis 17). For instance, Adorno published *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1944 while in America but the work was not available in English until 1972—almost 30 years later, or *Minima Moralia*, originally published in 1951 but not available in English until 1974. All biographies, whether the author favors Adorno's work or whether the author takes a caustic perspective, seem to hover around one focal point: did he speak as a distant elitist, or was he deliberately distant so as to speak the truth and thereby “lend a voice to suffering?” (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 17). Either way, there is a consensus about Adorno maintaining a certain personal space between himself and his environs, and biographers engage in the interpretation of that space. In *Minima Moralia* Adorno addressed the concept of space as a “distanced nearness,” (90) as a necessary mindset to “cognitively distance ourselves from mainstream society to lessen the force of conventional ways of thinking and the force of the collective” (*Political Theory* 457). Each biographer distinctively traverses that chasm

claiming to ease the path of interpretation for his or her audience. Each writer attests to the difficulty of understanding Adorno and posits himself as an interpretative aficionado. This exile, as his biographies demonstrate—especially by Claussen and Müller-Doohm—was not just a geographical separation. For Adorno “the complex situation of exile was no novelty to him; he was aware that his “philosophical intentions” already set him apart even before his emigration, “that his own programme isolated him intellectually. His focus on dialectical interpretation placed him outside both the historicizing tradition in the arts and philosophical scientism” (Müller-Doohm 170-171). This thesis argues that his intellectual isolation actually originated in his bourgeois, assimilated upbringing. “Even before his expulsion from his homeland, the intellectual’s experience of individual loneliness, isolation and marginalization was part of his make-up” (Müller-Doohm 170-171), something Müller-Doohm terms a “twofold exile.” The key to crossing the interpretive divide is to understand Adorno’s language within its two-fold exilic context.

Adorno’s two-fold framework, or “distanced nearness,” encompassed a cultural and linguistic realm in his personal life in the same vein as the dialectic he proposed in his academic works. For instance, Adorno expressed his burden for the moral responsibility of philosophy which obligates the critic/philosopher to remain true to the standards of the work itself. Such critique forces the philosopher to seek for the redemptive quality within the work because, by considering the work as a whole, it reveals an effort to reconcile the work to the current time period. Annika Thiem proposes that “Adorno’s analysis of art’s aesthetic comportment as critical and emotional offers a way of understanding philosophy as emotionally engaged and perceptive” (593). In simple terms, Adorno’s style makes philosophy come alive. In this sense he’s taking philosophy for its literal implication of being the love of wisdom (*philo-sophia*) --not the love of a system wherein to classify wisdom, but the love of a methodology that is meant to generate understanding in its most true and honest sense. According to Adorno, in order for philosophy to remain true to its premise

for wisdom it must think critically. This critical self-application can be seen, for example, in the way he critiqued his own homelessness as an intellectual status as well as a physical state of being. “Stigmatized as an émigré,” he referred to himself as “a quasi-professional homeless person” whose “experience of the alien in exile was congruent with the general experience of the intellectual as an outsider” (Müller-Doohm 170).

Each biographer attempts to discuss the homelessness of the exile. They all know that to understand the exile it is imperative to contextualize his language and his culture to avoid any grave misunderstandings. Jarvis, Jay, Wheatland and even Löwenthal, all offer to decode Adorno’s language by explicating his critical texts. Their approaches are rather interpretive roadmaps, like academic instructional “how to ...” manuals, to enter Adorno’s dialectic labyrinths. Wheatland’s study of *The Frankfurt School in Exile*, is “[especially] appealing to academics,” in the “way Critical Theory makes the analysis of culture feel like a revolutionary act in and of itself. Reading Adorno on modern music ... it is momentarily possible to believe that criticism is a weapon of liberation” (Kirsch, par. 1). Therefore, if critical analysis can be revolutionary and its analysis liberating then Adorno’s language must be seen as its weapon. If not, he ends up being misunderstood such as after his repatriation when he was severely criticized for his political non-activism. Jäger, especially, sees Adorno’s apparent inactivity as proof of his political apathy even though Adorno returned to Germany with the deliberate agenda to influence the young, post-Hitlerian generation. He states how Adorno’s linguistic style “recalls certain towers that are twisted in the shape of spirals because the imperial stem to which the groin rafters are morticed and tenoned is missing ... the effect is simply the product of his own vanity” (Jäger 179).

This falls in direct opposition to Löwenthal’s personal attestation to Adorno’s language. He avowed that “Adorno’s merciless, but always theoretically founded, indictment of the social phenomena themselves ... their faulty, distorted, and manipulated pseudo-interpretations in

bourgeois philosophy, social research, and literary criticism,” were all consistent (Löwenthal 189). He affectionately bestows a “brotherly tribute to this genius: ...Every thought and every word he ever said created a new *Ärgenis* [irritant] for his foes and friends alike” (Löwenthal 189). Only those who truly knew Adorno understood his language since they could decode the irritant. The most recent biography by Jenemann also acknowledges the accusations against Adorno of “intellectual narcissism,” and cites Adorno’s own claim that “perhaps the finest dialectical intelligence, the finest stylist, of them all ...the bristling mass of abstractions and cross-references is precisely intended to be ... a warning to the reader of the price he has to pay for genuine thinking” (vxi). Jenemann cautions that taking this dare at face value is to miss Adorno’s point completely. He will take on Adorno like a defense attorney and make “the case that it is in rediscovering Adorno’s actual encounter with American cultural practices during his exile that one can understand his continuing importance” (Jenemann xviii). Contrary to Jay’s statement of Adorno’s non-attachment, Jenemann will vehemently “argue that Adorno comes by his criticism—no matter how biting—honestly and with sensitivity for his material conditions. No ivory tower aesthete” (xviii).

Contrary to Jäger’s claim of political apathy, critic Shannon Mariotti comments that Müller-Doohm’s approach reveals “how Adorno’s unique form of democratic politics is premised upon a distance, a withdrawal, a critique from the margins of mainstream society and politics, that nevertheless avoids apathy, resignation, or disengagement” (Mariotti 457). True, to Adorno thinking itself becomes a method of praxis. However, Mariotti’s analysis neglects the fact that Adorno did speak from first-hand experience as an exile. His physical marginality was imposed upon him as a child and, in drastically different circumstances, as an adult. In fact, Adorno’s speech was already restricted in his home country before he even emigrated. In 1934, he reluctantly left Germany due to one main reason besides the outright anti-Semitism: “the fact that, in addition to acts of

discrimination, the authorities were trying to silence him. Condemned to impotence! ... that was his decisive reason for his emigration” (Müller-Doohm 170).

Adorno’s decision to become an exile, first in England and then in America, is not only evident in his geographic relocation but also in his conduct. This was most obvious in the way he used language as a means of survival and not just as a means to communicate. “Adorno assigned it a dual characteristic: through language human subjects become part of the universal, and at the same time they can assure themselves of their own individuality” (Müller-Doohm 364). Such duality, or dialectic, was present even since childhood. “The prodigy’s precociousness provokes external pressure,” such as from Adorno’s early “schoolmates, fellow students, and contemporaries ... to condemn the genius to the condition of the outsider” (Claussen 42). A few biographers mention the anecdote of when Adorno, as a youth, was on the tram and a neighbor confronted him calling out: “You goddammed little devil! Shut up with your High German and learn to speak German right” (Claussen 40, Müller-Doohm 31). Evidently, his speech already betrayed him, so to speak. Perhaps this incident was a catalyst to making Adorno aware of the need for subtlety in expressing himself. All biographers mention Adorno’s manipulation of his name: how he changed it, used a pseudonym, or wrote in anonymity. However, most focus on his name change as an adult in the United States when he legally adopted the name Theodor W. Adorno and published under the name T.W. Adorno, instead of using his full given double-barreled name: Wiesengrund-Adorno. He was severely criticized for this diplomatic move, especially by then contemporary Morgenstern and fellow-refugee Hannah Arendt who saw the change as “an almost collaborationist mentality” (Jay 34). Perhaps it was collaborationist, but if so, it was more in cooperation with Horkheimer’s “official policy of political isolation” since they were “terrified” they might, once again, be identified as political enemies (Wheatland 171). He was asked to change his name so as to not draw attention to more Jewish names in the Frankfurt Institute. Only Jenemann thoroughly

explores the fact that Adorno, as well as all members of the Institute, were under continual FBI surveillance. Though their presence in the United States had been welcomed, this did not change that it coincided with a historically tumultuous time especially after WWII broke out.

This thesis builds upon the biographical premises, especially those by Müller-Doohm, Claussen, and Jenemann, of his early and later life regarding the theme of duality, belonging and not belonging, in his bourgeois upbringing and exile. However, the personal allusions in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* become apparent by combining the study of various biographies on Adorno with his autobiographical aphorisms in *Minima Moralia*.

Section 3: Adorno's Life of Duality

The cultural aspects that surrounded Adorno from birth are what Claussen called a “paradoxical modernity”: tensions between old and new cultural values, economic reconfigurations, religious cross-pollination, and even linguistic adaptations. The methodical socio-economic nature of Adorno's narrative began even before he was born. The Wiesengrunds moved within Germany from Dettelbach to Frankfurt at a crucial historical crossroad: the city was in full-force transition from an agrarian to a modern society. Following the 1848 revolution up until 1870 the “patriarchal authorities” ruled the city and fostered its image as an ancient imperial metropolis opposing any kind of industrialization. However, after the Bismarck unification, Frankfurt was no longer an independent city-state. The unification presented new economic venues. For instance, by 1888 the city built a new Central Station, followed by the establishment of a university and the expansion of their harbor. Bernhard Wiesengrund, Adorno's grandfather, capitalized on the new opportunities and moved his wine business up to the emerging city. Besides the economic motivation, there were outbursts of anti-Semitism in lower Franconia which only fueled the impetus to relocate. “The Wiesengrund's move to Frankfurt was part of the secularizing process that might well be called the golden age of Jewish bourgeoisification in Germany” (Claussen 18). “The change from the old commercial center on the river Main to a modern German metropolis gave rise to a *particular synthesis* of old and new that resulted in the concrete image of the city in which Adorno was born on 11 September 1903” (Claussen 19, emphasis added). This “particular synthesis” of aristocratic tradition and the modern middle class characterized the Wiesengrund world.

They would qualify as being part of the small emergent middle class because they were able to afford a home and the 5000 guilders to obtain German citizenship for Adorno's mother. In 1914, Adorno's father would move the family to 19 Seeheimerstrasse. Their paradoxically modern,

assimilated family was a cultural fusion from the start. Their matrimony of a secular Jew of German origin and a devout Catholic of Corsican background already embodied a duality that was emblematic of their time and the metamorphosing culture. One aspect that is analyzed by various writers is the detail that Adorno's parents, Oscar Alexander Wiesengrund and Maria Calvelli-Adorno, gave their son a hyphenated, or double-barreled, last name. Müller-Doohm attributes the nomenclature to the wealth and gifts that were already showered upon young Theodor at birth. "Symptomatic of this abundance was the fact that his mother, whose maiden name was Calvelli-Adorno, toyed with the idea that her son should bear the name Adorno in addition to the father's name Wiesengrund" (Müller-Doohm 3). Certainly, the idea of combining the names could have been Maria's. However, no author mentions the fact that it was a common cultural practice in Germany to hyphenate the father and mother's last names, just like it was—and still is—in many other countries such as Great Britain, Turkey, Iberia, Scandinavia, Poland, Spain, or Russia. Perhaps allowing the double-barreling to acquire more than just a civic meaning adds to the mystique of this assimilated exile. Why else would the second sentence beginning Müller-Doohm's biography state that "...individual lives are determined by the gifts bestowed on them by the fairies, both good and wicked, operating through the culture of their time." Adding mystical elements, such as gifts from fairies, helps justify an extensive biography. Following this introduction containing a hint of Germanic folklore, the author deduces that Maria Calvelli-Adorno instigated the double-barrel designation, now alluding to a touch of feminism in the household. Perhaps so, however, enough authentic facts surround Adorno's origin that there is no need to try to aggrandize.

The political and biographical dialectic, or what the German poet Heine termed the "dialectic of progress," was obvious in the Wiesengrund-Adorno household. Besides the religious cross-pollination and the international acculturation, there was an aesthetic synthesis as well: Oscar

Wiesengrund, the expert wine merchant, married an accomplished musician. His business was “conducted with great flair ...he exported wine to Britain and the United States and established a branch of the company in Leipzig” (Müller-Doohm 15). He was a culture enthusiast who often attended concerts and operas and fell in love with Maria, an opera singer. Even their wedding was non-traditional since Maria’s French background and uncertainty of her actual German nationality prompted them to effectuate the ceremony in London. To add to the family panache, Maria’s sister, Agathe, also an accomplished singer, joined the Wiesengrund household from the onset of their marriage. The setup was unusual enough for Müller-Doohm to call a chapter: “A Generous Father and Two Musical Mothers.” Music defined young Adorno’s life from the start. He would attribute the consistent musical ambiance in the home to his Aunt Agathe, who made sure it “echoed from morning until night with singing, and with keyboard sonatas by Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. It was thought natural for the ten-year-old to go to concerts, and the adult always had fond memories of his first encounters with Mozart, Beethoven or Mahler” (Müller-Doohm 21). His father, besides being the successful financial backbone of the family, also wholeheartedly supported the in-house musical undertakings often hosting concerts in their home which, inevitably, led to highbrow discussions of which Adorno, from a young age, took part.

The effort to infuse young Theodor with a perpetual aesthetic aura is, indisputably, the result of a very deliberate effort by his parents. As mentioned before, this reflects a methodical socio-economic agenda from before he was born. As Michal Zmora Cohen states in the documentary *Orchestra of Exiles*: “There is no real child prodigy without the mother or father that’s behind him. They were really very pushy. You can’t be a child prodigy without this” (*Orchestra of Exiles*). Cohen spoke in reference to the parents of Bronislaw Huberman, the famous musician who founded the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in Palestine and used it as a venue through which to save the lives of one thousand Jews. Of course, it is noteworthy that the thousand

lives were all Jews in exile (escaping the same Nazi regime as the members of the Frankfurt School), beginning with Huberman himself. Cohen unapologetically attributes Huberman's success to the parents' fervent determination. It would be safe to make the same supposition in Theodor Adorno's case. If his parents had not inculcated an intense environment of cultural duality and intellectual environment, Adorno would not have developed into the prodigy he turned out to be. Obviously, they had no way of predicting the extent of his genius. They had a plan, not unlike all the other Jewish families that chose to assimilate, and they adhered passionately to their social and economic agenda. In hindsight, it is quite remarkable to note how these cultural aspirations ended up providing life-saving tools for those threatened by the Nazi terrorism where these exiles wielded aesthetic weaponry, so-to-speak, that provided a means of survival. As for this orchestra of exiles, Adorno's duality of culture in his personal and professional life was already a form of displacement that made exile easier and helped him survive. The academic and cultural talents they developed turned out to be their "golden tickets" to exile. Without the academic and social clout Adorno and the other members of the Frankfurt Institute had no reason to be granted political protection.

Adorno describes his own childhood as an idyllic environment that could only nurture the aesthetic upbringing. Though Cohen expressed the unequivocal need for the parents' intervention and resolve to push the child, it would seem that Adorno's stimulus came about in a very harmonious way. There is no rancor whatsoever in how Adorno writes about his childhood. "The child who thinks he is composing when he plays around on the piano endows every chord, every dissonance and every surprising turn of phrase with infinite importance ...as if they were being heard for the first time, as if these popular sounds, formulaic though they are for the most part, had never existed before..." (Müller-Doohm 21-23). The dissonance he mentions is something he was, obviously, unaware of at the time. However, the fact that he valued the freedom to be dissonant—or atonal—must be noted as a foreshadowing of his future application of that kind of going-against-

the-grain tenacity. The future critical mindset of Adorno was groomed in a free, quasi utopian environment. He was constantly surrounded by music and performances with extravagant costumes, and a piano, regarded as just another piece of furniture, to welcome all that were willing to play. “Playing duets was a gift I received at birth at the start of the twentieth century at the hands of the genii of the bourgeois nineteenth century...” (Claussen 32). Even with a tongue-in-cheek mention of genii, it is evident he is very thankful for the in-house aesthetic infusion where “every individual could find himself to a greater or lesser degree in the symphony ... that he could respond to it with his family in his own home, without losing any of its authority... one had constantly to earn the symphony if one was to possess it, by playing it” (Claussen 32).

Adorno referred to his secular, bourgeois upbringing as that of a “hothouse plant,” or “heliotrope,” thereby correlating himself with a protected, homegrown plant to symbolize his sheltered environment. In 1921, when Adorno was eighteen years old, Kracauer, Adorno’s private teacher at the time, described him to Löwenthal as a “wonderfully self-confident character ... He truly is a beautiful specimen of a human being; even if I am not without some skepticism concerning his future, I am surely delighted by him in the present” (Löwenthal 63). Löwenthal himself referred to Adorno’s home life as “an existence you just had to love—if you were not dying of jealousy of this protected beautiful life—and in it Adorno had gained the confidence that never left him his entire life” (Löwenthal 63). He would long to go back to his Garden of Eden, so-to-speak, especially while in exile. He could look back at his family environment which gave him, as it did the families of all other future members of the Frankfurt School, the opportunity to ascend socially. However, as Adorno expressed in 1950 in response to Benjamin’s reminiscing in *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, the images of infancy “are not idyllic, nor are they contemplative. Over them lies the shadow of the Hitlerian Reich” (Claussen 35). As painful as the tragic death of Benjamin was, Adorno does not sacrifice his critical edge even in commenting on his friend’s

book. “With a sense of panic the bourgeois mind becomes conscious of the disintegrating aura of its own biographical past, and indeed of itself: it appears as illusion” (Claussen 35). Adorno’s aesthetic and intellectual environment were just a part of the cultural milieu his parents crafted for him. In fact, it could be deduced that the imposed, peaceful diversity would have been the perfect preparation for his future uprooting. “The feeling of the international was familiar to me from my home and also from my parents’ guests ... That international was no centralized state” (Claussen 50). But the future land(s) of exile would not be all-encompassing lands of “festive assemblage of different things ... The land they enclosed, however, and which I myself occupied, was no-man’s-land ... [a] word that I understood at the time all the better, the less I knew of it: utopia” (Claussen 50). In exile, he would come to the realization that this ideal home would never again consist of a physical dwelling place, but rather of a deliberate mindset.

Section 4: Decoding the Language of the Exile

The language of the exile demands decoding. “Exiles commonly employed ‘slave language’ to express, indirectly or in a coded form, thoughts that in earlier days had been uttered openly” (Claussen 9). Exiles used this implicit language so they could communicate in a foreign country and not draw attention from the police. “It was a language that Adorno never fully abandoned in later years” (Claussen 9). To fully comprehend Adorno’s curious nomenclatures it is necessary to go further back than the official name change in America. Muller-Doohm is the only biographer to consider the full picture of Adorno’s multifaceted actions. Adorno considered himself an intellectual, “not necessarily an isolated intellectual, but a mind willing to assume the personal risks associated with being provocative” (Müller-Doohm 42). The fact that he chose alternate names or pseudonyms is evidence that he wanted to write, without opting to remain silent. The disposition of the provocateur, I maintain, goes back to his childhood rearing. As a youth, he would humorously refer to himself as Dapsel von Zabelthau, the magician in E.T.A. Hoffman’s stories, the well-known German Romantic author who was also known for being a caricaturist. Müller-Doohm picks up on this sarcasm as “one side of Adorno’s mood” (Müller-Doohm 180).

To avoid emigration at all costs, Adorno preferred to publish under a pseudonym, as silence was not an option for this irritating character. In 1936, he wrote a controversial essay about Jazz music (yet another gravely misunderstood piece) and published it under the alias Hektor Rottweiler. He believed the name was “a good piece of camouflage,” stating: “the Rottweiler was a typical butcher’s dog and was almost always called Hektor. It was a fearsome beast and so no Nazi will ever suspect that it might be the identity of a non-Aryan writer” (Müller-Doohm 180). How could one not see the audacity in this approach? Such resolve to being published reveals his tenacity even though he, like most Germans at the time, did not fully comprehend the extent of the Nazi threat. Even later, once his home was in California, he composed a piece of music to celebrate

Horkheimer's return after a few weeks away, a friendly separation which had caused Adorno much grief. He titled the piece "Rüsselmammut's Heimkehr," signed "Archibald Bauchschleifer." It is curious that only Muller-Doohm mentions this composition (unless this document was simply not available prior) though he doesn't define the terminology. How could biographers overlook something so blatantly humorous whose title signifies "the trunk of the mammoth" which included a reference to the 1941 film, *Heimkehr*, a Nazi film which caricatures Polish people so as to justify their extermination? In addition, the implication of a pseudonym such as Archibald (arch-chief), and Bauchschleifer (belly grinder), is just too exaggeratedly sarcastic to disregard. However, this example of intimate humor, not to mention the extensive use of animal pseudonyms between Adorno and his wife, his parents, and friends such as Horkheimer, are examples of private interaction. Once he was fully committed to his American exile there are various instances when Adorno's simply withheld his name from the publication. The duality in Adorno's language can further be explored in his academic works, specifically in *Minima Moralia* and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Section 5: *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

As he lived in exile in New York (1938-1941) and, subsequently, California (1941-1949), Adorno collaborated with Horkheimer and put their “philosophical fragments” in writing to produce *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. They were able to dedicate themselves to this effort full-time after they relocated to Los Angeles since their workload was no longer shared with extensive projects for the Frankfurt Institute. The book was written in 1942, published in 1944, yet not until the Preface to the Italian edition of 1962/1969 do the authors specify their work must be taken in its proper context. Perhaps they had assumed readers would consider the historical framework of their work all along. Nevertheless, twenty years later they saw a need to avoid any further misunderstanding and remind their audience to contextualize their philosophy: “It is self-evident that ... the book is shaped by the social conditions in which it was written ... on the basis of social phenomena of the 1930’s and 1940’s in America” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Preface). The most noteworthy social phenomena of that time were an America that was still reeling from the Great Depression, the bombing of Pearl Harbor (1941), and the United States officially entering WWII. The less obvious phenomenon was that Adorno, as Jenemann proposes, “immersed himself fully in American culture, while at the same time struggling to maintain his German identity,” and was finally forced to secure his own financial independence at age thirty-five rather than rely on the financial backing of his parents (Jenemann xv, Müller-Doohm 172). However, probably the most compelling yet most unstated factor which only the most recent biographers barely mention (other than Jenemann), is that these émigrés were, as per the Alien Enemies Act of 1918, officially considered “enemy aliens.” For instance, when Horkheimer sent a telegram to Pollock in 1941, that message was forwarded to the FBI as part of the bureau’s “ongoing and pervasive investigations into potentially ‘subversive’ activities” (Jenemann xii). They were followed, had to adhere to curfews, and were even visited by police, such as in the summer of 1942, to make sure they were

abiding by the regulations. “Adorno and the Frankfurt School were more or less continuously under surveillance by the FBI during their stay in the United States” (Jenemann 182). For a people who had just left a first-world country taken over by a dictator, to be offered exile and yet remain stigmatized as enemy aliens must have aggravated their sense of banishment and their fear of a possible recurrence. Horkheimer remarked on “‘the horror that overcame ... the isolated émigré,’ when faced by these restrictions on foreigners” (Müller-Doohm 299). In a letter to his parents Adorno compared their circumstances to being imprisoned. In another letter to the conductor Rene Leibowitz he defined as ‘trauma’ the fact that he was physically incapable of composing what he thought he would have been able to if it were not for his “biographical destiny and assuredly also because of certain psychological mechanisms” (Claussen 133). *Dialectic of Enlightenment* reflects this dichotomy between welcome exile and enemy alien insofar as the work was an analysis of the consequences of a culture affected by the Enlightenment. “Thus his *Dialectic of Enlightenment* reflects not just a change in the state of the world but one that Adorno experienced on a personal level” (Claussen 133). He wrote with hindsight of his homeland and with foresight of the new culture to which he was still assimilating.

Adorno observed a great similarity between the post-Weimarian Germany and the cultural dynamics in the United States. Being under surveillance, like he had been in Germany, he could have refrained from authoring a critical work that could easily have been identified as anti-American propaganda because the exiles “under the technical provisions of the law, were essentially barred from being critical of America ‘by word or deed’” (Jenemann 182). Yet America is not just implicitly alluded to but unequivocally named in the chapter “Enlightenment as Mass Deception” of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* when remarking on the function of radio. “In America [the radio] levies no duty from the public. It thereby takes on the deceptive form of a disinterested, impartial authority, which fits fascism like a glove” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 129).

Adorno's statement that something as seemingly harmless as a radio can innocuously be an instrument of fascism, is by no means a lighthearted warning, but rather a grave cautioning from someone with first-hand insight on how smoothly a "recommendation" of a product in a broadcast can "become the *Führer's* overt command" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 129). How ironic to have been the victim of such kind of subversive transition in Germany—in fact, it took heartfelt persuasion from several people to convince Adorno that he was in severe danger if he didn't emigrate—only to end up in a country where he observed the potential of the same political catastrophe. He felt the alienation of "his exile host, America, in the 1930's and '40's by rediscovering the intricate and multi-faceted practices in the culture industry he faced and ultimately resisted" (xxviii Jenemann). *Dialectic of Enlightenment* takes the study of such cultural tendencies towards deception all the way back to ancient times, traces its development up to the events in Germany, and leaves off with a warning to future cultures back in his homeland and even the whole world; something he referred to as a "message in a bottle, ... destined to be passed on through the night that is approaching" (Claussen 161). In fact, "the idea of the message in a bottle belongs to the prehistory of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*" (Claussen 161). Hence, his Preface to the New Edition (1969) specifies Adorno and Horkheimer "do not stand by everything [they] said in the book in its original form," because that would contradict the variable "temporal core to truth." Though much of what was written would no longer be applicable since it was composed when "the end of the National Socialist terror was in sight," they did not "underestimate the implications of the transition to the administered world" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Preface). To him, "Critical thought ... requires us to take up the cause of freedom, of tendencies toward real humanity, even though they seem powerless in face of the great historical trend" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Preface). He believed Critical thought was his duty regardless of the risk involved, thus, the importance of reading the critique within its cultural and historical context.

He was not critiquing America as an indifferent outsider; on the contrary, he was vociferating as a passionate insider. He was practicing what he termed “immanent” versus “transcendent” critique. Unlike transcendent critique which “first establishes its own principles, and then uses them as a yardstick by which to criticize other theories,” Adorno used his real-life situation, in this case his exile, and “[used] critique of concepts to get to a critique of the real experience” (Jarvis 6).

Section 6: Decoding the Language of the Enlightenment

Adorno's methodology reflects an immanent critique of language. Exile taught him the role of language, something which was thoroughly inculcated in his academic background and upbringing, and the need to wield this privilege with caution but without compromise. "He did so in a professional manner, though in his own way, and without making concessions. He remained the man he was" (Müller-Doohm 172). As an immanent social critic who knew first-hand the language of the bourgeoisie, of academia in his native German tongue and now also in English, he was able to decode the language of the Enlightenment. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a meticulous demystification of the concept of Enlightenment as a perfectly logical, calculable system. To Adorno it was not a matter of rejecting eighteenth-century Enlightenment, rather, a study—a "dialectical enlightenment of enlightenment"—as to why the movement failed (Zuidevaart). Why did an ideology that tried to rationalize thought turn out to be counter-productive and yield a dogmatic, self-defeating formula? Adorno retorts by exposing the flawed rationale in a system that claimed to embrace knowledge yet did not safeguard the movement by remaining critical throughout its development. He believed critical thought was the only way to protect any movement from deception and to uphold the cause of freedom. He then paralleled the delusion of the enlightenment to the demise of the bourgeoisie who, according to Adorno, were governed by the same penchant for equations (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Endnote 4). Both advocates of Enlightenment and devotees of the bourgeoisie systematized their credos in such a way where, ultimately, meaning was lost and replaced by formula which, in turn, affected language. The language of science and mathematics projected a false sense of knowledge, security and control. Adorno juxtaposes bourgeois ideology to Enlightenment's dogma to show how both adhered to the same methodology. Both posit definitive properties to their equations: The Enlightenment equated science with knowledge, knowledge with power which, in turn, provided control over nature.

Therefore, it made perfect sense to proclaim man as the master over nature because they had a mathematical formula to believe in, regardless of what it really meant (or didn't mean). In the end, Enlightenment reverts back to myth, the very ideology it had set out to negate. Similarly, the bourgeoisie ruled by the principle of a forced equivalence reducing things that are "dissimilar" to "abstract quantities," in the same vein that Enlightenment would categorize anything that didn't have a numeric solution, as an "illusion." The main drive behind this scathing critique was to demystify the Enlightenment and bourgeois claims; he would display the naked emperor and show the true makeup of his clothes—the material didn't exist, and the clothing was a complete myth. The fruit of an enlightened, bourgeois, post-Weimarian culture was not supposed to be a reign of terror. Yet Adorno's critique shows how that was, in fact, the only possible result. Nevertheless, his analysis could only come by seeing the effect on his own personal life. Adorno's own bourgeois upbringing, as idealistic as it was, could not prevent his eventual exile. His modern, assimilated, academic, aesthetic, multi-cultural grooming did not protect him from facing either exile or death.

His personal disenchantment with the bourgeoisie and his homeland, and his experience of exile, equipped him to decode its deceptive language. "The effect of Adorno's experience in America was to demystify bourgeois culture" (Claussen 189). He traces the language of "domination" back to Plato and Aristotle and deciphers a direct correlation between the "power of language" and ideas: the more "superfluous" the ideas, the more the power of language increased. (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 16-17) Hence, language itself became a formula (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 133). In his efforts to go against that formulaic linguistic grain, Adorno's influence, especially at Columbia University, was to establish what became known as the "language of facts." Under his influence this new verbal code evolved "into the notion of instrumental reason that would subsequently be the basis for *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Reason, blunted by the realities of modern civilization, had lost the ability to view the world critically"

(Wheatland 79). He wanted to help break the “continuous cycles of social injustice and domination” (Wheatland 79). In implementing their language of facts, Adorno and Horkheimer generated their own personal dialectic through which to sieve their philosophy, as they reconstructed the “rise and fall of Western thought from the standpoint of a history of philosophy” (Müller-Doohm 278). They met every afternoon and often had “quite heated” discussions as Gretel, Adorno’s wife, would type up notes on what was said, followed up by multiple revisions and corrections. Adorno attributed the success of the book to that dualistic dynamic between himself and Horkheimer: “the *Dialectic* derives its vital energy from the tension between the two intellectual temperaments which came together in writing it” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ix).

Adorno’s *Dialectic* reflects some of the painful events in his personal life as well as those in the grander world scheme. His life circumstances didn’t just consist of physical changes, such as his various relocations or modifications in his job description, but they demanded internal changes as well. In a letter to Pollock in 1942, he wrote: “It is true, the subjects I am dealing with are the most difficult ones that exist, but the pains you suffer by working on them are at the same time the greatest experience you can have in life” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 226). In order to survive he had to adapt. Perhaps the most obvious sign of adaptation was seen in his language. Besides the notion of a private, coded slave language, or the language of facts, or any of the other forms of academic language in Adorno’s intellectual arsenal, he also changed the way he wrote. “During his years of exile his literary style acquired the contours that turned him into one of the century’s most individual writers ... his philosophy acquired the intellectual force and theoretical density that later became manifest in his writings ... such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*” (Müller-Doohm 172). The notion of suffering—his own and that of the Jews in Germany and Europe—and a sense of guilt at having survived the Holocaust, awakened in him an even greater sense of duty in

regard to the grave responsibility of criticism. “Adorno’s critical theory is nourished with a feeling of solidarity with suffering that distinguishes it from all forms of academic scholarship” (Claussen 267). He upheld this burden of duty until the end of his life. In 1969, the year he passed away, he expressed to Horkheimer in regard to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: “If this book assists the cause of resistance to achieve a consciousness that illuminates and that prevents people from succumbing to blind practice out of despair and from succumbing to collective narcissism, that would give it genuine function” (Claussen 338). That function was defined by the words—the language—in his book. In 1942, after the completion of *Dialectic*, though its original title had been *Philosophical Fragments*, Adorno wrote to Horkheimer expressing his horror and concern at the obliteration of the Jewish people. The premise of their book had been to “explain why humanity instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* xiv). Regardless of feeling overwhelmed with sadness and that the undertaking of this book exceeded his capability, he told Horkheimer: “The possibility that ... we too might fall victim to the concentration camps must not be allowed to justify our abandoning the desperate search for *words* that could become deed and liberate us all” (Müller-Doohm, 282, emphasis added).

Section 7: *Minima Moralia*

Published after Adorno's return to his homeland, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* is his most personal work presenting an intimate glimpse into the heart and mind of this exile. Though some critics call it an autobiography, it is not written in the traditional format of the genre. It is autobiographical in that the "reflections" are personal but, most of all, because of Adorno's particular appreciation of aphorisms as "models of a dialectical way of thinking" and "their particular prose form" (Müller-Doohm 343). Kracauer commented on Adorno's "ability to enter mentally into the material of existence," and on his skill to counter-balance any argument: "when an interpretation seemed one-sided ... it was soon followed by another one that revised or supplemented the first ... having been drawn into the dialectical process" (Müller-Doohm 343). Even in his most personal work Adorno remains true to his conviction for immanent criticism that "should be at every moment both within things and outside them" (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 74). *Minima Moralia* provides insight into Adorno's dialectical thought process and illustrates the role of language in his exile as he delivers an ongoing social commentary—or demythologization—of the status quo.

It is commonly accepted that Adorno began to write this book of aphorisms in 1944, completed it in 1949, and published it in German in 1951 after his repatriation. As mentioned before, the work was not available in English until 1974, about twenty-five years later. However, Adorno began to formulate these maxims as early as his first exile to England in 1934 after reading Horkheimer's book of aphorisms, *Dawn and Decline* (Muller-Doohm 206). In that sense, this little critical book represents more than just his thoughts during WWII, it expresses his reflections and philosophy as he transitioned from one exile to another: from Oxford, to New York and Los Angeles, and back to Frankfurt. In this context, *Minima Moralia* embodies the intellectual arc of Adorno's cultural criticism and personal development from 1934 until 1951. As Andreas Huyssen

claimed, Adorno was already a critic of culture in the 1930's, understanding that "high culture and mass culture are intertwined ...rooted in the same social conditions. In other words, Adorno was aware of the problematic position of official high culture ...before he came to the United States" (Hohendahl 77). Often, Adorno is accused of biased and elitist criticism. However, such negative view neglects to consider that the "damaged" life of the émigré Adorno identified with after his exile did not originate in the US. "The original source of the damage was not the culture industry in America, but rather the European culture and society that forced him into exile in the first place" (Jay, "Adorno in America" 161). His upbringing was grounded in the Weimarian, bourgeois culture that ultimately failed him and the other members of the Frankfurt Institute who had similar backgrounds. One of the main reasons this group had come together was due to the disillusionment they had in common in how their bourgeois background had ultimately failed to provide a narrative of philosophical progress.

Though Adorno's dedication to criticism remained consistent throughout his life, his writing reflects a change in perspective. His viewpoint, or "lens," as Martin Jay purports, was affected by his physical placement or dis-placement. In America Adorno viewed his new environs "through the lens of his earlier experience, once back home, he saw Germany with the eyes of someone who had been deeply affected by his years of exile" (Jay, "Adorno in America" 165). Nonetheless, the majority of *Minima Moralia* was written during WWII "under conditions enforcing contemplation" (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 18). Adorno credits his time in America to when he was "liberated from the naïve belief in culture," and assimilated the "ability to see culture from the outside" (Adorno, *Critical Models* 239). This new outer view offered the needed dialectic to the inner view into the culture he had as a German bourgeois, allowing him to abide by his philosophy of being "both within things and outside them." He stated: "In spite of all critique of society ... I was taught the lesson ... in America, where no reverential silence reigned before

everything intellectual as it does in Central and Western Europe far beyond the so-called cultivated classes; the absence of this respect induces the spirit to critical self-reflection” (Adorno, *Critical Models* 239). His exilic state compelled him to look at life in a way he would not have if it had not been forced upon him. He wrote this book “from the standpoint of subjective experience” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 18). Though Adorno maintained his conviction of non-participation in the war effort, his *coup de force* came in the form of cultural criticism of America in *Minima Moralia* and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Just as with his other works, his aphorisms beg proper interpretation of the deliberately “disconnected and non-binding character of the form” (Bielsa 378). In this sense, *Minima Moralia* continues to embody Adorno’s original, analytical self, engendering a continuous form of self-criticism even as a “damaged” writer.

The title itself, *Minima Moralia*, exemplifies Adorno’s typical use of irony and exaggeration. Whereas Aristotle wrote *Magna Moralia*, translated as “Great Ethics,” Adorno posits an extremely condensed version of his own minimal “Moralia,” that were begotten by “damaged” goods. It is safe to assume that his choice of “minima,” or minimal, by which to entitle his *Moralia*, or ethics, is in reference to the quantity of aphorisms and not to the quality. True to Adorno’s style, he is deliberately enigmatic, demanding intellectual participation from his audience. This book “bears witness to a dialogue intérieur” wherein we read an inner discourse inside the “narrowest private sphere” of the “intellectual in emigration” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 18). Curiously, in the first paragraph of the introduction Adorno declares: “He who wishes to know the truth about life in its immediacy must scrutinize its estranged form” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 15). This statement sets the tone for the entire work. Though he doesn’t outright declare that everyone should experience exile his implication is very clear, though written in the third person, that one “must” scrutinize an alienated form of life in order to grasp the truth. How else would anyone scrutinize an alienated life without some kind of exile? From the start he is showing that his insight to the truth

came from a privileged or advantageous position, not one related to social status, but one of estrangement—of suffering.

Said discusses the position of the exile “not as a privilege, but as an *alternative* to the mass institutions that dominate modern life” (146). He defines exile as “fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past...always out of place” (Said 140, 143). However, Said sees this as an advantage of the exile. “Seeing ‘the entire world as a foreign land’ makes possible originality of vision” where, instead of having one perspective, the exile has (at least) two. What Jay defined as the new “lens” of the exile, Said calls the “plurality of vision.” Either way, they qualify exile as an advantageous “awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that ...is contrapuntal” (Said 148). Though he defined the point of view as a contrapuntal, or polyphonic, scaffold from which to critique, it is still clear Said claims the exile has a better view. This exilic position provides a natural dialectic state where “both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally” (Said 148). The constant duality provokes a sense of homelessness which, according to Said, allows the exile to act as though he were at home wherever he or she is. In the eighteenth aphorism, where Adorno cites Nietzsche’s avowal of his “‘good fortune not to be a house-owner,’” he increases the stakes by saying “we should have to add: it is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 39). How could a man whose family had been homeowners in Frankfurt and who had the possibility of purchasing one in his hometown, make the act of owning a home a question of morality? He brings his cultural Marxism to the table here in exposing his conviction that homeownership, in its modern sense, has become an impersonal matter of possession for the sake of possessing. He also brings in the Hegelian concept of dialectic by stating that “the thesis of this paradox leads to destruction, a loveless disregard for things which necessarily turns against people too; and the antithesis ...is an ideology for those wishing with a bad conscience to keep what they

have. Wrong life cannot be lived rightly” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 39). Clearly, this point of view was the fruit of his exile especially once he declared: “The house is past. The bombings of European cities, as well as the labour and the concentration camps ...technology ...had long decided was the fate of houses” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 39). In a letter to Thomas Mann, he declared ““one is nowhere at home”” (Müller-Doohm 170).

Adorno had a different sense of homelessness for the intellectual. To him, the unpleasant experience of the “alien in exile was congruent with the general experience of the intellectual as an outsider” (Müller-Doohm 170). In this sense he was an exile metaphorically as well as physically. But he tells on himself, so-to-speak, when admitting “but of course anyone who is engaged in the business of demythologization should not complain too much about it. Such a person is condemned to live in a state of suspension” (Müller-Doohm 170). He takes this concept even further in *Minima Moralia* in declaring that for the homeless writer, “writing becomes a place to live” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 87). The next logical step would be to presume that Adorno set up his new metaphorical home in his writing. However, in true Adornian self-critical and dialectic mode, he immediately retorts to his own aphorism about dwelling in writing and concludes that even there, the writer must guard himself against “self-pity” and “counter any slackening of intellectual tension with the utmost alertness. In the end, the writer is not even allowed to live in his writing” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 87). Contrary to Said’s conclusion that the exile could be at home anywhere, Adorno embraces perpetual homelessness, or permanent exile. Adorno’s seemingly contradictory claim of the writer living in his writing yet not allowed to remain there, is a perfect example of his deliberate perpetual dualism. He knows the danger of complacency and he knows even the best of situations can change at any given time. Therefore, his motto of home/no home is really just a self-balancing method to avoid the pitfall of many intellectuals who had compromised, what Adorno deemed as, the moral duty of their position. “[Intellectuals] whose material situation has changed:

...persuaded themselves of the need to earn money by writing ...they turn out trash” that is exactly like the writing they previously repudiated (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 29). “Just as once-rich émigrés are often self-indulgently miserly on foreign soil as they always wanted to be at home, so the impoverished in spirit march joyously into the inferno that is their paradise” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 29-30). The biographer Müller-Doohm insists Adorno’s “attempts of an uprooted intellectual to find his bearings were not motivated either by his personal experience of enforced emigration or by the shock of having to adapt to the social and cultural realities of the countries that gave him refuge” (171). He equates Adorno’s “metaphorical description of bourgeois society as hell,” as representative of the exile’s view of the desperate state of the entire world. In this vein, Adorno’s exile functioned as a metaphor for the concept of exile as a natural, human condition. He makes this clear in his eighteenth aphorism, “Refuge for the Homeless,” where homelessness is a “predicament of private life today” for everyone, not just exiles (Müller-Doohm 38). The solution: live an “uncommitted, suspended,” and “private” life. The only way to live such a successful life is to avoid the idea that one had “arrived” at any time. Clearly, even the titles of his two major works composed in exile capture this sense of temporality: one announces “fragments” and the other “reflections.” *Dialectic of Enlightenment* begins with Adorno’s note about the temporality of the work, and originally ended the chapter entitled “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” with the words “to be continued.” His philosophy was intended to be universal, but he never claimed every statement to be timeless. Adorno did not set up shop, so to speak, in his works. However, he did look for universality in the language of his writing—in the words.

Adorno’s main impetus for finally leaving Germany came down to his refusal to be silenced by the authorities. Müller-Doohm had mentioned Adorno saw this final edict as being “condemned to impotence.” Adorno wasn’t fighting back in any physical way: therefore, if he saw being silenced as being powerless, it is because he recognized the power of words. When he wrote about

dispossession, he didn't mean in the material sense of belongings. "[Officials] and recruits, have stepped visibly out of my dream and dispossessed me of my past life and language...In Fascism the nightmare of childhood has come true" (Müller-Doohm 193). His possessions were his words. The main changes Adorno would have to succumb to were not physical relocations. His life work, his use of language, would demand a major overhaul so as to be able to continue to voice his convictions but with a whole new methodology.

Adorno's language demands interpretation and cultural context. Though *Minima Moralia* is autobiographical in nature, many aphorisms are worded in such way that it can only be deduced that he speaks of himself. The title declares "reflections from damaged life," without patently stating "from *my* damaged life." In this collection of precepts Adorno stated that "[every] intellectual in emigration is, without exception, mutilated, and does well to acknowledge it to himself ... he is always astray" (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 33). Though he does not say "I was mutilated," it is clear that he is an intellectual and, therefore, has been mutilated. However, if he had not been physically dismembered in any way, how can he be maimed? "His *language* has been expropriated, and the historical dimension that nourished his knowledge, sapped" (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 33, emphasis added). This philosophical dismemberment was aggravated "by the formation of closed and politically-controlled groups, mistrustful of their members, hostile to those branded different." The contention within this group of émigrés, at times, caused a "disunited community" that, due to circumstances, was forced to work towards "a common goal of integrating philosophy and science to develop a comprehensive theory of modern society" (Wheatland 1). Their predicament induced even more contemplation. Their work was comprised of words which, given the financial constraints and political pressures of asylum, obligated them to work together, thereby molding them into an "indisputably a tight-knit group" (Wheatland 25). It is in this dialectic context of the tension within the Frankfurt group, juxtaposed with the political tensions

without the group that--with Adorno as its spearhead--the “language of facts” evolved. In 1939, right after his emigration to the U.S., Adorno jotted down thoughts in one of his notebooks about the challenges of developing a theory of society due to the constraints of language. “Language no longer permits us to say things as they have been experienced ... The fact that the power of facts has become so horrifying, that all theory, even true theory, reads like a mockery of this – this has been burned into language, the organ of theory, like a stigma” (Müller-Doohm 423). Obviously, the Frankfurt group in exile had to find a way to communicate so as to agree amongst themselves, be able to accomplish the purpose for which they were granted exile, while maintaining a low profile—especially under constant surveillance—to work without the threat of being repatriated. Therefore, the “Horkheimer Circle broadened its rhetoric to present the totalitarian menace in terms that an American audience would appreciate. It threatened liberty, democracy, and the middle class—the very foundations of American society” (Wheatland 236). Adorno knew their language of facts would determine their future status as well as provide a venue to work without compromising his conviction to declaring the truth. The personal reflections in *Minima Moralia* help to decode the “slave language” of the exile hidden within the “language of facts.” Such interpretation sanctions a new lens through which to interpret *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, his major work composed in exile. In this contrapuntal light, Adorno’s interpretation of Odysseus exposes a parallel between his own linguistic cunning and that of the Greek exile.

Section 8: Adorno and Odysseus in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in Light of *Minima Moralia*

Minima Moralia, Adorno's personal post-exilic publication, enables a closer reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* written during his exile. The subjective, autobiographical writing opens up a new lens through which to analyze his previous academic writings. What makes such a claim possible? In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno dispels what he deems to be the myth of the Enlightenment by using Odysseus as an example of the prototypical bourgeois. Adorno pinpoints key terms and strategies used by Odysseus which, in light of *Minima Moralia*, seem much too similar to Adorno's comportment and language to be regarded as merely coincidental. Just the mention of the *Führer* in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as an example of one who "[postures] as [engineer] of world history," only strengthens the claim to the personal nature of his critique, given the very current example pertaining to his particular situation. Adorno breaks down Odysseus' ability to overcome the predetermined mythical paths by carefully analyzing how, in each incident, the Greek hero manages to escape his certain doom through cunning. Odysseus doesn't rely on his physical strength; rather, it is his verbal prowess that proves to be strategic to freedom. Therefore, it is logical to deduce that Adorno's insight to Odysseus' verbosity had personal appeal, especially for a social critic who studied and applied the power of language. His demythologization of Enlightenment really comes down to a demythologization of language. Adorno conclusively states that "[speech] itself, language ... is the law of Homeric escape" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 61). It is fascinating to analyze how Adorno applied the same Homeric law in his personal life and trace how he also used language as a means to escape.

Dialectic of Enlightenment does not repudiate the philosophies of the Enlightenment; rather, in it Adorno shows how its principles of knowledge and rationalism were not fully applied. "The critique of enlightenment ... is intended to prepare a positive concept of enlightenment which liberates it from its entanglement in blind domination" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* xviii).

According to Adorno, manipulation of language is at the root of empowerment. Strong, authoritative language projects security, control, and knowledge and, thereby, dissipates fear. “Threadbare language” and “false clarity” simply “[reinforce] the existing order,” thereby creating a society of a “manipulated collective [consisting] in the negation of each individual” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 9). Adorno posits Odysseus as the prototype of a bourgeois who works within an existing order and who, ironically, by submitting to its authority, cunningly manages to outmaneuver that establishment. He proposes an explanation as an insider—an immanent critic—since he too was raised according to bourgeois principles. His critique was controversial because of its alleged hypocrisy: it seemed he was biting the proverbial hand that fed him. “Adorno’s own biography is, however, marked by a certain tension between his theoretical rejection of the bourgeois category of the individual as an autonomous subject leading a distinct life and the way he leads his own life as a *Bildungsbürger* par excellence” (Celikates 5). Was he really a bourgeois par excellence? He certainly grew up with the financial backup needed to pursue academia, music, and aesthetics. In fact, he didn’t even feel the constraint of having to support himself financially until the age of 35. However, it is not fair to target his financial means to justify negative criticism. It seems these critics ignore the seclusion Adorno and the other Frankfurt intellectuals not only imposed upon themselves but were also subjected to due to the tense political climates in Germany and in the US. Adorno stands out in how he learned to navigate the political and academic system in a sort of dualistic way—simultaneously overtly and covertly—just like Odysseus. Adorno used his exile as a means to voice his convictions yet evade the possibility of internment camps or death, whereas Odysseus used his guile to deliberate with his captors and elude captivity or death.

The first instance where Adorno examined the Greek hero’s peregrinations was the encounter with the Sirens. “Measures like those taken on Odysseus’ ship in face of the Sirens are a prescient allegory of the dialectic of enlightenment” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 27).

“Odysseus is represented in the sphere of work” and, in that societal context, Adorno declares that “exclusion from work means mutilation,” for the unemployed as well as “for people at the opposite social pole” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 27). He does not directly equate himself with Odysseus or with those pertaining to the contrasting “social pole” of the unemployed. That personal correlation is simply implied yet obvious if taken in light of *Minima Moralia*. He associates the inability to work for people on diametric poles of the social strata to mutilation. In this context, *Minima Moralia* suggests a much more personal connection. In the thirteenth aphorism he portrayed the intellectual in emigration as being mutilated. Yet, in both cases, for Odysseus and Adorno, neither had been physically maimed. However, their inability to perform the task they have been trained to do is equated to dismemberment: Odysseus cannot be the able warrior and Adorno cannot liberally carry out his academic gift. He uses the Hegelian master-slave dialectic to illustrate how the masters, such as bourgeois like Odysseus and Adorno, are kept from participating in actual work. Odysseus is an illustration of the master’s impotence as he is literally tied to a mast while the workers, or slaves, “cannot enjoy their work because it is performed under compulsion, in despair, with their sense forcibly stopped” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 27). Both master and slave, members of opposite poles, are stuck in a societal rut. Adorno can identify with the imposed impotence because of the censorship in Germany and in America. Though equating linguistic suppression with mutilation might sound extreme, when bearing in mind that Adorno considers language the lifeline to truth and freedom, his analogy accurately depicts the oppression. Due to his upbringing, he was not equipped to work in any other capacity. Curiously, this apparent flaw in Adorno’s training is intriguingly similar to Odysseus. Neither believed they could properly work outside of their societal realm, therefore obligating them to find a way to function within their constrained circumstances.

Contrary to any popular depictions of Odysseus as the mighty warrior, Adorno—in true atonal Adornian mode—takes on an antithetical view of the hero. He describes him as a “powerless,” “shipwrecked, tremulous navigator” who, nonetheless, survives “dangerous temptations deflecting the self from the path of its logic” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 38). Odysseus survives not because of his physical strength, but because he “exposes himself most daringly to the threat of death, thus gaining the hardness and the strength to live ... the self does not exist simply in rigid antithesis to adventure but takes on its solidity only through this antithesis” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 38). The prototypical bourgeois, the “bearer of mind, the one who issues commands—as Odysseus almost always appears—is in all cases physically weaker than the primeval powers with which he has to wrestle for his life despite all the reports of his heroic deeds” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 44). Similarly, Adorno is described as the “physically frail intellectual,” by his biographers (Claussen 103, Muller-Doohm 35). Neither Odysseus nor Adorno rely on their physicality in confronting their obstacles. The powers that be dictated the path of the protagonists: mythical fate determined Odysseus must navigate the path by the Sirens, and the Nazi regime decreed the censorship for Adorno. Both diktats threatened certain captivity or death, and both characters submit to the imposed conditions. Both abide by the legal constraints yet, both cunningly devise a legitimate loophole within the system.

Adorno explains how Odysseus circumnavigates his fate. He clarifies that “defiance and beguilement are one and the same, and whoever defies them is lost to the very myth he challenges. Cunning, however, is defiance made rational. Odysseus does not try to steer a different course to the one past the Sirens’ island. Nor does he try to insist on the superiority of his knowledge” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 46). Odysseus “complies with the contract of his bondage,” subjects himself to the song of the Sirens, but ties himself to the mast so as to not succumb to the inevitable temptation. Adorno asserts that Odysseus, in acknowledging the power of the songs, is

“technically enlightened.” Such personal enlightenment empowers him to find a “loophole in the agreement through which he eludes it while fulfilling its terms” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 46). In this same vein, Adorno fulfills the terms of his agreements. He abides by the rules of censorship yet finds a loophole within the system. He ties himself to a proverbial academic mast, just like the Institute of Social Research did with the University of Frankfurt and with Columbia University, to facilitate his social criticism. When being founded, the Frankfurt Institute adapted to protect itself from any political repercussions and, thereby, found a legal way to fly under the radar, so to speak. So too Adorno adjusted his academic language. In fact, his formal academic training and integrated upbringing equipped him as a perfect fit for this Institute that was constrained to assimilate in order to survive. Odysseus “throws himself away, so to speak, in order to win himself” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 38). Adorno gives up his homeland, his native tongue, and his aspiration for musical composition so as to find his voice within a completely foreign academic setting. “The formula for Odysseus’ cunning is that the *detached*, instrumental mind, by submissively embracing nature, renders to nature what is hers and thereby cheats her” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 45, emphasis added). Adorno discusses the same principle of detachment in *Minima Moralia*. First, he admonishes the need to recall one’s “frailty” to not “run the risk” of esteeming “himself better than others and misusing his critique of society as an ideology for his private interests” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 26). He makes such an admonition because he knows that in the old bourgeois ideology, “each individual ... consider himself better than all others” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 27). Therefore, he explicates that “[the] detached observer is as much entangled as the active participant; the only advantage of the former is insight into his entanglement, and the infinitesimal freedom that lies in knowledge as such” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 26). Clearly, Adorno’s new detached perspective stems from his experience as exile, wherein he learned to appreciate his physical frailty and, in losing his

previous position as a German academic, thereby won “infinitesimal freedom.” He understood full well how this antithetical perspective negated the “momentum of the bourgeois within him” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 26). By negating, or withdrawing from, this momentum, it forced him “to develop a coldness indistinguishable from that of the bourgeois” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 26). These statements validate the reason for all the criticism he endured as a seemingly distant elitist. Yet, in reading his social criticism in light of his biographical writings, it ought to be clear that his detached position is not one of superiority, rather, a deliberately adopted distant position wherein the intellectuals constitute both “the last enemies of the bourgeois and the last bourgeois” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 27). He concludes, in a very Odyssean fashion, that the only way out of the societal “entanglement,” the “only responsible course is to deny oneself the ideological misuse of one’s own existence, and for the rest to conduct oneself in private as modestly, unobtrusively and unpretentiously as is required, no longer by good upbringing, but by the shame of still having air to breathe, in hell” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 27-28). He embraces his role as critic as the logical outcome of his upbringing, nevertheless, fully aware of the grave responsibility. It is no coincidence he entitled this sixth aphorism: *Antithesis*. Exile compelled him to apply the Hegelian dialectic to his own life in being distant yet solidaristic. “For the intellectual, inviolable isolation is the only way of showing some measure of solidarity ... It is the sufferings of men that should be shared” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 26).

Adorno’s lifestyle and language were both means to solidarity which he implemented in the Odyssean way: by submitting to a system he ultimately learned to outmaneuver. “[This] prototypical shipwrecked [sailor] makes [his] weakness—that of the individual who breaks away from the collective—[his] social strength” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 48). Odysseus’ and Adorno’s instrument of power was language, cunning their methodology, and thought (self-

reflection) the only antidote to deception. “The instruments of power—language, weapons, and finally machines—which are intended to hold everyone in their grasp, must in turn be grasped by everyone” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 29). Even though he uses Odysseus as a bourgeois prototype, and speaks of himself in *Minima Moralia*, his admonition to grasping language as an instrument of power is completely democratic, accessible to both poles of society. In this case, Adorno asserts “cunning as a means of exchange, in which everything is done correctly, the contract is fulfilled yet the other party is cheated” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 48). Legally, Adorno satisfied all that was expected of him in his exilic agreement, and in the exchange, he saved his life and was even able to bring over some relatives as part of the contract. However, he masterfully had to alter his academic communication and adopt the language of facts and the language of exile.

The key to Odysseus’ survival was “deliberate adaptation” to the powers that determined his paths, and thereby “[bringing] nature under the power of the physically weaker” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 44). The key to adapting was in the demystification of language. “Mystical fate had been one with the spoken word” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 47). The word uttered was equated with power; “expression merged with intention. Cunning, however, consists in exploiting the difference” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 47). Adorno explains how Odysseus, in discovering that one word can actually have multiple meanings, becomes cognizant of “dualism.” When Odysseus tells the Cyclops, Polyphemus, his name he is fully aware of its duality: *Udeis* can mean “hero” or can stand for “nobody.” Odysseus, in manipulating his name’s dichotomy, embodies a dialectic role of captive and captor. “He declares allegiance to himself by disowning himself as Nobody; he saves his life by making himself disappear” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 47-48). Odysseus expresses his “adaptation to death through language” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 48). Adorno implemented the same strategy of rhetorical

adaptation throughout his lifetime. He used pseudonyms as deliberate camouflage, such as when he published his controversial piece on Jazz music in Germany under the name Hektor Rottweiler, so no one would suspect a non-Aryan author. Upon request he changed his name in the U.S., dropping the hyphenated Wiesengrund, so as to dissimulate the Jewishness of the Frankfurt Institute, and he certainly revealed his astute sense of humor as he signed off the short piece of music he composed for Horkheimer with the name Archibald Bauchschleifer.

However, this lesson in adaptation didn't happen without some margin of error. Odysseus almost ruins his cunningly devised escape when he ties himself to the bottom of the sheep, tricks Polyphemus with his dual name yet, upon fleeing, decides to mock the giant and reveal his real name. "The cunning by which the clever man assumes the form of stupidity reverts to stupidity as soon as he discards that form. That is the dialectic of eloquence. From antiquity to fascism" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 53). Here, Adorno compared Odysseus' reaction to "the Jew who, in fear of death, continues to boast of a superiority which itself stems from the fear of death" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 54). Adorno attributes Odysseus' reaction to "fear that if he does not constantly uphold the fragile advantage the word has over violence, this advantage will be withdrawn by violence" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 54). Perhaps Adorno identified with the same impulse as that of the "astute hero" who is "always tempted to ignore the proverbial wisdom that silence is golden" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 54). There was a time when Adorno modified his speech but not in the cunning way he learned to adopt later in life. When the Nazi regime first began to spread its oppressive tentacles, Adorno still tried to pursue his aspiration for social commentary before his American exile. In 1933 he was a student at Merton College, Oxford, and though his license to teach had already been revoked, he continued to work on his opera project, and wrote numerous book reviews and music articles. His positive review of a performance of the composer Wagner, the darling of the National Socialist regime, was published

in issue number 7 of the *Europäische Revue*. In a second article in issue number 5 of the same publication, he wrote about the recent ban of “Negro Jazz” music on German radio. The biographer Müller-Doohm comments that though Adorno’s article was not clear, what became controversial was his use of terminology such as “eliminate,” “race,” and “cultural Bolshevism,” that would have been seen as pro-Nazi. In 1934, Adorno demonstrated the same kind of linguistic carelessness when he gave a positive review in *die Musik*, a journal that had been taken over by Nazis, of the male choir poems by Baldur von Schirach, Hitler’s youth leader. He used Goebbels’s (the Nazi politician and Reich Minister of Propaganda under Hitler) term “romantic realism” (Müller-Doohm 184). These instances lay dormant until 1963 when a student in Frankfurt published an open challenge to Adorno questioning his silence about his previous article in an anti-Semitic and National-Socialist periodical. Adorno published his defense in a subsequent issue justifying his writings stating it should be obvious from “his defense of the music that the Nazis had slandered as ‘decadent,’” that “he had never intended to ingratiate himself with the Nazi rulers” (Müller-Doohm 185). Adorno’s concluded by stating: “My true mistake lay in my misjudgment of the situation” (Müller-Doohm 185). Like many Germans he had underestimated the gravity of the political situation. However, his efforts in publishing his works in early exile (England) without a clear assessment of the associations and repercussions, were very similar to the reaction he critiqued about Odysseus as a prototypical bourgeois. Perhaps this is why later, years into his American exile, besides using pseudonyms and changing his name, he even remained anonymous in his collaboration as musical advisor to Thomas Mann for his novel *Doctor Faustus*. His deliberate anonymity distinguishes him from Odysseus in that Adorno did, eventually, show his understanding of the silence as golden.

However, Adorno’s silence takes on a new characteristic. Due to his exile he learns this silence is conditional. He no longer wished to promote the self for the mere sake of self-

preservation. “[To] call philosophy -- as I once did myself – the binding obligation to be sophisticated, is hardly better” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 73). He reproves “bourgeois coldness,” by challenging that today’s thinker should be, as stated previously, “at every moment both within things and outside them.” His language underwent a transformation through his experience of exile.

Conclusion

Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno's life starting with his childhood, to his fifteen years of exile (England 1934-1938, America 1938-1949) to his repatriation to Germany, could be described as a living-breathing dialectic. His assimilated yet distinct upbringing established a pattern he would adhere to for the rest of his life: a dualistic approach that equipped him to adapt to the difficult demands of exile. His parents embedded a strategy of assimilation along with a bourgeois education which enabled Adorno to become the intellectual prodigy he was groomed to be. However, this cultural and academic grooming did not foresee the national tragedy that would shroud his homeland as well as much of Europe. Adorno weathered the ensuing cultural and linguistic uprooting by learning to wholeheartedly embrace the exilic circumstances. His example of continual adaptation demonstrates his ability to remain true to his early conviction of the need for continuous criticism, yet simultaneously learn the strategic cunning necessary to navigate the precarious political and cultural landscapes. Adorno's autobiographical *Minima Moralia* offers subjective insight into this life of perpetual assimilation. This work equips his audience to implement Adorno's personal commitment to a philosophy of praxis and decipher his deliberately dissonant writings. *Minima Moralia* opens up a new venue through which to interpret *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, specifically Adorno's understanding of Odysseus. His analysis of the Greek exile's methodology resonates in light of Adorno's personal aphorisms from his "damaged life."

Adorno used Odysseus as "[the] epitome of rationality and cunning (List), he is a perfect fit for an allegory of the enlightened Ego making its way toward eventual autonomy from mythical constraints" (Porter 202). Adorno underwent a similar process of enlightenment and autonomization from some of society's mythologies. For instance, he learned to demythologize the Central and Western European reverence for culture. His experience of exile in America provoked a "spirit of critical self-reflection" which empowered him to redirect his "naïve" regard for culture

(Adorno, *Critical Models* 239). But this kind of revelation came at a personal cost. Like with Odysseus, this progressive self-betterment was conditional in that it involved allowing the archetypal maiming of the self. In the words of Adorno, “European intellectuals such as myself are inclined to view the concept of *adjustment* [*Anpassung*] merely negatively, as the extinction of spontaneity and the autonomy of the individual person” (Adorno, *Critical Models* 240). Yet, as Adorno came to apprehend, freedom comes “not by each of us realizing ourselves as individuals, according to the hideous phrase, but rather in that we go out of ourselves, enter into relation with others, and in a certain sense relinquish ourselves to them. Only through this process do we determine ourselves as individuals, not by watering ourselves like plants in order to become well-rounded cultivated personalities” (Adorno, *Critical Models* 240). It is difficult not to sense the allusion to his 114th aphorism, “Heliotrope,” where he described his idyllic, protected childhood. Admittedly, he had been a well-watered, protected, cultivated plant. Yet it took a serious transplant out of his childhood greenhouse for Adorno to fully grow into the assimilated, dialectic critic he would become. He even warns, after repatriation to Germany, against “[becoming] superficially and undialectically rigid” (Adorno, *Critical Models* 240). For Odysseus to overcome the predetermined mythological path or for Adorno to overcome the historically imposed path, both men had to embrace “deliberate adaptation” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 44). “The pattern of Odysseus’s guile is mastery of nature by such adaptation” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 45). One cannot help but hear the echo of Adorno’s allusion to self when he declared that Odysseus had to be able to “wait, to be patient, to renounce ... he must include in his calculations the loss of companions ...” (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 45). Adorno too had to implement the same three strategic virtues and remember the tragic loss of compatriots such as Benjamin. The most powerful manifestation of his adaptation was his deliberate manipulation of language. Adorno

learned to cunningly maneuver his linguistic prowess so as to conform to the new academic system yet still be able to formulate his criticism.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno presents Novalis' definition that "all philosophy is homesickness." To this philosophical premise he—as per his usual *modus operandi*—adds his own conditions. To Adorno, the concept of homeland first had to be "wrested from myth" so as to be able to conclude that "[homeland] is a state of having escaped" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 61). Exile clarified that the concept of homeland is not "settlement and fixed property," rather a mind-set and a heart-set. Wresting Germany from myth was crucial to Adorno's development. He was no longer yearning for a geographical landmark, rather, he reduces his native land and that of all humanity to one, single, democratic concept. "Whosoever belongs among the persecuted has ceased to possess any unbroken form of identification. The concept of native land [Heimat], country, are all shattered. Only one native land remains from which no one is excluded: mankind" (Claussen 25). Language was the venue into this newly defined realm. "Speech itself, *language* as opposed to mythical song, the possibility of holding fast the past atrocity through memory, is the law of Homeric escape" (Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 61, emphasis added). And to this new all-inclusive land of humanity, Adorno tried to be the self-appointed guardian of its new language. Back in Germany, "resistance to his ideas focused repeatedly on his use of language, above all on his insistence of using words of foreign origin and his savage criticism of the 'jargon of authenticity,' that trend toward linguistic chauvinism characteristic of post-Nazi Germany" (Claussen 42). Until his death, Adorno tried to safeguard his idea of such a "utopia of language, a language without earth, without subjection to the spell of historical existence, a utopia that lives on unawares in the childlike use of language" (Claussen 43). His final plea, obviously influenced by his experience of exile, was to uphold a language wherein a redeemed people could safely dwell and search for truth.

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