

## THOMAS MANN'S HOUSE PROJECT: The Literary Salon as the Site of Futurity

**BRIEF:** In this project we will consider anew questions of identity and belonging within the context of exile and democracy, with the focus on freedom and equality. Amir Eshel argues that an engagement with the past opens up the present to new political, cultural, and ethical possibilities—futures. In a globalized world, education must equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to be informed, engaged, and empathetic citizens. That urgency is best expressed with the words of Thomas Mann, who was part of the literary salon while in exile from Nazi Germany in Los Angeles: “All civilization and all moral development are from the spirit of literature, which is the soul of human dignity” (*The Magic Mountain*). In that same spirit and approach toward the human person, Goethe—whose cult came into being in the literary salons—popularized the concept of world literature in view of democracy. Using two urban humanities methods, thick mapping and fotonovela, we will explore the exile, as it pertains to the author himself and to his fictional character Tonio Kröger.

### ASSIGNMENT 1: Thick Map

Thick maps are metaphorical maps conjoined with temporally layered stories where thickness stands for cultural analysis of the political, economic, linguistic, social, and other stratificatory and contextual realities. Our goal is to produce a collective spacial literary and cultural representation of Thomas Mann's house connecting the past, present, and future through—among other sites—his library, including Goethe's collected works. While creating a thick map, we will keep in mind the concept of exile that either produces creative freedom or traps the writer in restrictive nostalgia.

**DIRECTIONS:** During our field trip to Thomas Mann's House (he lived there from 1942 to 1952 in a house built according to his specifications) choose a thick scene (a location- and time-based experience where multiple narratives intersect) from the life of Thomas Mann. What stories does this location tell? In what ways is its Erkennbarkeit (recognizability) and Lesbarkeit (legibility) (Benjamin) accessible to the observer? Since history breaks down into images (Benjamin), what kind of literary montage (assembly of voices, stories, images, citations) emerges? How does this urban manifestation inform your understanding of Thomas Mann as an émigré? What is the present function of the house? Points to explore: architecture, interior design, furniture, library, photographs, connection to the European Jewish émigré community and other Germans in the area.

### ASSIGNMENT 2: Fotonovela

This collective project incorporates visual design to examine how narrative perspective is intertwined with the experience of place. We will create a fotonovela that recreates passages from the novella *Tonio Kröger* in a visual medium.

**DIRECTIONS:** The passages you choose should include a description of urban spaces. Think about Tonio Kröger's experiences of inner exile as a metaphor for social alienation and about how they correspond to particular locations. Your narrative must contain images (photographs or sketches), mapping, and evidence of textual and spatial research. How does Tonio Kröger's marginalization correspond to the places he occupies? What is the mix of memories and/or emotions the places evoke in him? Does he associate places with loved ones? How do these places inspire or dispirit him?

private sphere



"The house was so completely my own"

1942-1952  
ARCHITECTURE: Julius Davidson, moderate modernism  
INTERIOR DESIGN: Paul Huldshinsky, "Gemütlichkeit"

Erkennbarkeit (recognizability) and Lesbarkeit (legibility) (Benjamin)  
TWO PRINCIPLES OF EXILE

- 1. the inside: "inhabited museum devoted to a lost homeland"
- 2. the outside: "Seven Palms" (house's nickname)



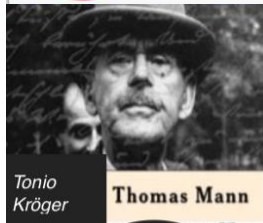
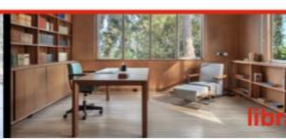
LIBRARY AND SALON (democratic space)  
PLATO: dialogue  
GOETHE: world literature  
JEAN-PAUL → R. Levin Varnhagen, D. Mendelssohn Schlegel, F. Schlegel → symphilosophy

FOR SALE (Summer 2016; almost demolished)  
SOLD (November 2016); German Government

"The White House of Exile" (Frank-Walter Steinmeier)  
The residency program—intellectual exchange (artists, writers)  
5 Voices of Democracy—inspired by the monthly BBC radio address T. Mann delivered from California to Europe

private-public sphere

public sphere



Tonio Kröger  
Thomas Mann

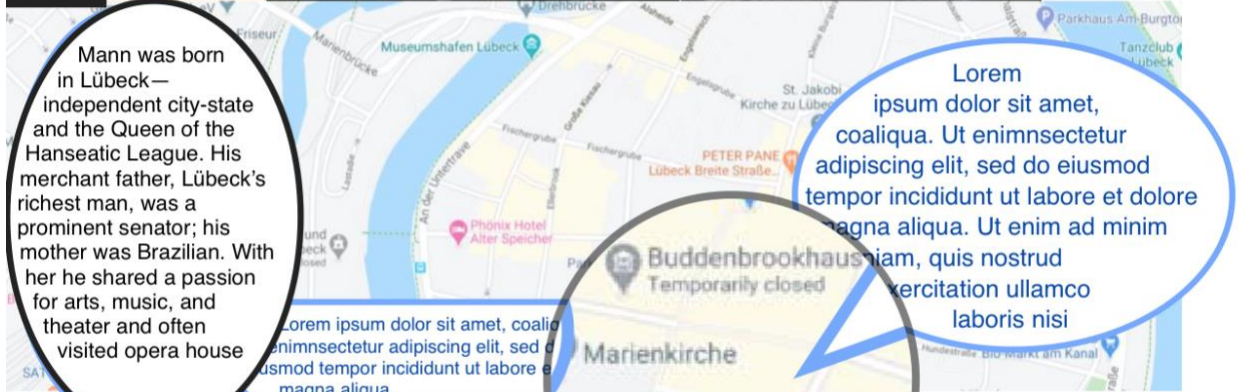


I'm named after my mother's brother, Antonio.



She comes from the south.

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Mann was born in Lübeck— independent city-state and the Queen of the Hanseatic League. His merchant father, Lübeck's richest man, was a prominent senator; his mother was Brazilian. With her he shared a passion for arts, music, and theater and often visited opera house

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Why did Hans feel ashamed of calling him Tonio in front of another person?



Everybody loved Hans Hansen.



Hans's eyes were so blue and he lived in such harmony with the world.