

# LITERATUR

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## in Wissenschaft und Unterricht

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                              **William Shakespeare**  
                              **Lola Lemire Tostevin**  
                              **Johannes Bobrowski**  
                              **Funktionen von**  
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## Now more than ever seems it rich to die: Morbidity and English Romanticism in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*

Meine Scheu, eine tiefe, mystische, zum Schweigen anhaltende Scheu, beginnt vor der religiösen Größe der Verfluchten, vor dem Genie als Krankheit und der Krankheit als Genie, vor dem Typus des Heimgesuchten und Besessenen, in welchem der Heilige und der Verbrecher eines werden...

Es wäre mir ganz unmöglich, über Nietzsche und Dostojewski zu scherzen ... Woraus hervorgeht, daß meine Scheu vor den Vertrauten der Hölle, den großen Religiösen und Kranken im Grunde weit tiefer – und nur darum schweigsamer – ist als die vor den Söhnen des Lichts.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Mann's Faustus-figure, the uncannily inspired composer Adrian Leverkühn, bases most of his compositions on literary sources. Among the texts he sets to music are passages of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, various pieces of medieval Mediterranean poetry, several tales from the late medieval collection *Gesta Romanorum*, the German Volksbuch of D. Johann Fausten, Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Ariel-Songs from *The Tempest*, Klopstock's ode "Die Frühlingsfeyer", thirteen Brentano poems and five poems by Verlaine. Of the English Romantics, Leverkühn composes four of William Blake's most sinister poems, "The Sick Rose", "Silent, silent Night", "A Poison Tree" and "I saw a Chapel all of Gold", and two of the great odes of Keats, the "Ode to a Nightingale" and the "Ode on Melancholy". On these, this essay concentrates, although most of the other texts can also be shown to fulfil a particular function in the novel, either through a suggestive parallelism of motifs or by foreshadowing or re-echoing events or thoughts. The Blake and Keats poems, however, especially lend themselves to an analysis of how Thomas Mann selected Leverkühn's sources and of how these are intricately woven into the complex whole of the novel.

The symbolic significance of these texts in the context of the novel can be analyzed on three levels.

On the first level, a summary of Thomas Mann's image of Romanticism in his creative and critical writings may explain the function of Romanticism as a literary epoch in the novel; on the second level, Blake and Keats as literary figures can be shown to underscore, even personify concepts and notions inherent in Thomas Mann's understanding of Romanticism. Finally, the poems themselves reflect key motifs of the novel.

<sup>1</sup> "Dostojewski – mit Maßen", first published 1946, repr. in: Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke in 13 Bänden*, 2nd. rev. ed. (Frankfurt/Main, 1974, repr. 1990), vol. IX, p. 657. All further references to works of Th. Mann are to this edition.

If, from the multiplicity of Thomas Mann's remarks about Romanticism in his essays, one attempted to distil his essential understanding of Romanticism, one could do worse than settle for a definition of the Romantic as an inextricable linkage of beauty and morbidity.

Tracing the development of his view of Romanticism in his critical writing, one might begin in 1918. In his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, "sympathy with death" to him is the formula and fundamental definition of Romanticism:

»Symphatie mit dem Tode« – ein Wort der Tugend und des Fortschritts ist das nicht. Ist es nicht vielmehr, wie ich sagte, Formel und Grundbestimmung aller Romantik?<sup>2</sup>

In this context, referring to a musical motif of Pfitzner's *Palestrina*, a creative sympathy with death is named as the motif of Romanticism, the *summary* or *last word* of Romanticism:

Und jenes schöne, wehmütig-schicksalsvolle Palestrina-Motiv ... es wäre also das Motiv der schöpferischen Sympathie mit dem Tode, das Motiv der Romantik, das *Schlußwort* der Romantik?<sup>3</sup>

In his 1925 essay "Goethe und Tolstoi", disease is claimed to be characteristic of a certain type of creative artist, represented by Schiller and Dostojewski:

... der eine schwindsüchtig, der andere epileptisch. ... Empfinden wir die Krankheit nicht als etwas in dem Wesen dieser beiden tief Begründetes, als ein notwendiges und charakteristisches Zubehör ihres Typus? Und zweitens: scheint uns nicht, daß es die Krankheit ist, die in ihrem Falle einen Adel, eine Vornehmheit zeitigt oder zum Ausdruck bringt?<sup>4</sup>

In the same essay, Thomas Mann derives from Goethe a whole series of concepts equated with the Romantic on the one, and the Classical on the other hand:

Wir haben hier also eine Anordnung der Dinge, nach welcher sich das Naïve, das Objektive, das Gesunde und das Klassische auf der einen Seite und das Sentimentalische, das Subjektive, das Pathologische und das Romantische auf der anderen Seite als identisch erweisen.<sup>5</sup>

Goethe himself had developed this notion from Schiller's distinction between the naïve and the reflective poet in his famous essay "Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung". One might add to this list, in Nietzschean terms, the Apollonian on the Classical and the Dionysian on the Romantic side, two further terms of great importance to Mann's philosophy of art.

Thomas Mann's essay "August von Platen"<sup>6</sup>, written in 1930, again invokes this fateful combination of beauty and death by establishing a causal relation between the two:

Schönheit und Tod, und daß der Pfeil des Schönen der Pfeil des Todes und ewigen Sehnsuchtschmerzes ist, erst darin vollendet sich's. Tod, Schönheit, Liebe, Ewig-

keit sind die Sprachsymbole dieses zugleich platonischen und rauschvoll musikalischen Seelenwunders voll Faszination und Verführung ...<sup>7</sup>

These are Thomas Mann's remarks about "Tristan", that most famous of Platen's poems from what Thomas Mann calls "the softer ... more romantic sphere"<sup>8</sup>, of which the first two lines read: "Wer die Schönheit angeschaut mit Augen, / Ist dem Tode schon anheimgegeben".<sup>9</sup> Who, in this context, would not associate Thomas Mann's own *Tod in Venedig*, dating back to 1911, in which this flirtation with death, this idea of the intoxication with beauty leading to the worshipper's death finds its purest expression. But through its original title "Tristan", this essay leads us back even further to 1903. For, even in Mann's early novella of the same title, beauty and fragility, seduction, art and death are united in the figure of Gabriele Klötherjahn, of whom Spinell writes that she withers, proudly and happily under the fatal kiss of beauty:

Sie stirbt, mein Herr! Und wenn sie nicht in Gemeinheit dahinfährt, wenn sie dennoch zuletzt sich aus den Tiefen ihrer Erniedrigung erhob und stolz und selig unter dem tödlichen Kusse der Schönheit vergeht, so ist das *meine* Sorge gewesen.<sup>10</sup>

Only a year later, almost forty years before he finally began to write the novel, Thomas Mann first conceived the idea of a Faustus-novel; the note, which appears in his 1904 notebook, already mentions the syphilitic artist, who, intoxicated, creates the most outstanding works before, finally paralyzed, the devil takes him:

Figur des syphilitischen Künstlers: als Dr. Faust und dem Teufel Verschriebener. Das Gift wirkt als Rausch, Stimulanz, Inspiration; er darf in entzückter Begeisterung geniale, wunderbare Werke schaffen, der Teufel führt ihm die Hand. Schließlich aber *holt ihn der Teufel*. Paralyse.<sup>11</sup>

It is apparent that the essentially Romantic motif of intoxication as inspiration was central to Mann's conception of the novel.

Taking into account the literary works, we see how the connection between art or beauty and death in the novelist's thought can be traced back to the beginning of the century.

Several essays and lectures from between 1943 and 1947, the time of composition of the novel, further expound these motifs. In a lecture entitled "Deutschland und die Deutschen", delivered and published in 1945, Thomas Mann again quotes Goethe's laconic equation of the Classical with the healthy and sane and of the Romantic with the sick<sup>12</sup>, and, using Blake's image of the rose containing the destructive worm, he claims Romanticism to bear within it the germ of disease, and at its core, claims it to be seduction, seduction to death:

<sup>7</sup> "August von Platen", in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. IX, p. 271.

<sup>8</sup> "aus jener weicheren ... romantischeren Sphäre", *ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>9</sup> quoted *ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>10</sup> *Tristan*, in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. VIII, p. 254; Spinell also speaks of her soul as "belonging to beauty and to death" ("ihre Seele aber gehörte der Schönheit und dem Tode"), *ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>11</sup> *Notizbücher*, (2 vols), ed. by Hans Wysling & Yvonne Schmidlin (Frankfurt/Main, 1992), vol. II, pp. 121f., italics underlined in manuscript.

<sup>12</sup> "Deutschland und die Deutschen", in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. XI, p. 1145.

<sup>2</sup> *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. XII, p. 424.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 424.

<sup>4</sup> "Goethe und Tolstoi", in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. IX, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> This was originally given as a lecture to the August-von-Platen-Gesellschaft (Oct. 4th 1930) under the title "Platen – Tristan – Don Quichotte".

Aber es ist nicht zu leugnen, daß sie, [die Romantik] noch in ihren holdesten, ätherischsten, zugleich volkstümlichen und sublimen Erscheinungen den Krankheitskeim in sich trägt, wie die Rose den Wurm, daß sie ihrem innersten Wesen nach Verführung ist, und zwar Verführung zum Tode.<sup>13</sup>

The entire essay is closely related to the writing of *Doktor Faustus*, and although Mann is here speaking of German Romanticism, a generalization to make his statement embrace English Romanticism as well seems permissible here. This becomes apparent if one considers the choice of poems from this sphere in the novel, in particular Blake's "Sick Rose", which may be claimed to be invoked here, all the more so since Mann gave this lecture after he had just completed the second "Blake-chapter" of the novel (XXVII), as can be inferred from *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*.<sup>14</sup> In the same context, this lecture contains a further interesting remark about Romanticism, disease and genius. Claimed to favour mystical ecstasy and Dionysian intoxication over reason, Romanticism is brought to an artistically fertile relationship with disease. Here, Nietzsche is referred to as a late Romantic, a spirit whom disease had driven to the heights of fatal genius:

Das Vorrecht vor der Vernunft, das sie [die Romantik] dem Emotionellen, auch in seinen entlegenen Formen als mystischer Ekstase und dionysischem Rausch einräumte, bringt sie in eine besondere und psychologisch ungeheuer fruchtbare Beziehung zur Krankheit, – wie denn noch der Spätromantiker Nietzsche, ein selbst durch Krankheit ins Tödlich-Geniale emporgetriebener Geist, nicht genug den Wert der Krankheit für die Erkenntnis feiern konnte.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, in 1946 while he was still working on *Doktor Faustus*, Thomas Mann wrote an essay on Dostojewski, in which he adds him to his list of literary *genii* inspired and driven by disease, and closely associates Dostojewski with Nietzsche, whom in other essays, as we have seen, he repeatedly classes with Romanticism. Thomas Mann himself and innumerable critics have spoken of *Doktor Faustus* as a Nietzsche-novel, and in this essay, passages on Dostojewski, Nietzsche and disease include striking verbal parallels to descriptions of Leverkühn's satanic-syphilitic inspiration. Mann here describes how an already gifted artist through infection is raised to the icy and grotesque heights of genius and isolation, invoking Leverkühn's renunciation of love due to the infernal pact:

Nietzsches geistige Entwicklung [ist] nichts anderes als die Geschichte einer paralytischen Enthemmung und Entartung, – das heißt des Hinaufgetriebenwerdens aus hochbegabter Normalität in eisige und groteske Sphären tödlicher Erkenntnis und moralischer Vereinsamung, einem entsetzlichen und verbrecherischen Grade des Wissens...<sup>16</sup>

One of the corresponding passages in the novel is found in the central colloquy with the devil, in which the promise of rapturous inspiration at the expense of a cold life without love is the central idea:

Dein Leben soll kalt sein – darum darfst du keinen Menschen lieben. ... Die Illumination läßt deine Geisteskräfte bis zum Letzten intakt, ja steigert sie zeitweise bis zur helllichten Verzückung.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting that in the essay on Dostojewski, Thomas Mann once uses the adjective "romantic" even for Dostojewski's work; his disease is certainly seen in terms of Nietzsche's late-romantic philosophy of the sick artist. Furthermore, Mann refers to Nietzsche's disease as one characteristic of artists and especially of many musicians.

It is obvious that while he was writing *Doktor Faustus*, Thomas Mann not only worked his understanding of inspiration and disease in cases like Schiller's, Dostojewski's and especially Nietzsche's into the novel, but that an inverse process also occurred: several essays written during the time of composition bear the mark of his preoccupation with key motifs of his novel. Some of these key motifs and concepts, such as the linkage of beauty, art and morbidity, disease and creativity and even the motif of demonic or Dionysian energy, to Thomas Mann are, as the passages cited have shown, quintessentially *Romantic* notions.

With this understanding of Thomas Mann's view of Romanticism, we can turn to the second level, to Blake and Keats and their roles in the sphere of Romanticism within the novel.

As A.W. Riley remarks in his 1965 essay<sup>18</sup>, Thomas Mann's then son-in-law W. H. Auden in 1935 presented him with an edition of Blake's *Poetry and Prose*. But it seems that he did not study Blake before the time of composition of *Doktor Faustus*. Mann's interest in and understanding of Blake mainly derives from two sources, both of which are mentioned in his diaries. In the entries for March 11th and 12th 1943<sup>19</sup>, he refers to Klaus Mann's English book on André Gide, which he had recently received and which he apparently read during the months of planning the novel, before he actually began to write it late in May 1943. This book centers on the "demonic" in the œuvre of Gide, ascribing a vital role to Blake's influence in the development of his thought. The understanding of Blake expressed here takes the revolutionary, ostensibly demonic Blake of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* at face value. It still largely adheres to the 19th-century Swinburnian interpretation of Blake as the demonically inspired artist and apparently does not recognize the ironic reflections of Swedenborg in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Klaus Mann writes:

Do we recognize him, this revolutionary, dynamic demon, whose contradictory magic can compel us to fall into dire depths or to soar to glorious heights? William Blake, for one, was on appallingly intimate terms with that divinely devilish Being.

<sup>17</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. VI, p. 332.

<sup>18</sup> A. Riley, "Notes on Thomas Mann and English and American Literature", in: *Comparative Literature*, XVII (1965), p. 65; the volume given to him by Auden is now in the Thomas Mann-Archiv Zürich.

<sup>19</sup> *Tagebücher 1940-1943*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt/Main, 1982), pp. 534ff.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1145.

<sup>14</sup> *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. XI, pp. 223ff.

<sup>15</sup> "Deutschland und die Deutschen", in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. XI, pp. 1144f.

<sup>16</sup> "Dostojewski – mit Maßen", in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. IX, p. 663.

"This Angel", we read in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "who is now become a Devil, is my particular friend".<sup>20</sup>

This understanding apparently shaped Thomas Mann's conception of Blake.

But the diary indicates a second source of Thomas Mann's view of Blake. Only two months after he read about Blake in his son's book on Gide, the diary entry for May 23rd 1943<sup>21</sup> records that Mann was reading Jakob E. Poritzky's book *Dämonische Dichter*.

Poritzky writes of the "demonic poets":

There are no horrors of the soul, no secrets of the night, no mysteries of madness, no enigmas of death, no repulsions of the spirit, there are no atrocities and no crimes which they would not describe in full and inimitable colours! These poets with a special liking dwell on the phantastic dark side of things ... on the dark, fatal powers; ... The hatred against day and any form of light – a truly romantic characteristic – is found throughout with these poets.<sup>22</sup>

In a chapter entitled "The Pathological Artist", Poritzky writes about Blake:

A man suffering from hallucinations and visions is certainly not "normal"; but what would we know of William Blake and similar artists had they been "normal"? ... His writing was subject to the same demonism. For he only wrote when driven by the spirit, who dictated the text to him.<sup>23</sup>

Again, this obviously shaped Thomas Mann's understanding of Blake, and various passages on Adrian Leverkühns "demonic creativity" in the novel are reminiscent of this understanding.

It seems a fascinating thought to see Blake as a further model for Adrian, apart from Nietzsche. Adrian is so consistently modelled on Nietzsche that, as Thomas Mann writes in *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, he must not be mentioned in the novel since Leverkühn has, as it were, taken his place:

Da ist die Verflechtung der Tragödie Leverkühns mit derjenigen Nietzsches, dessen Name wohlweislich in dem ganzen Buch nicht erscheint, eben weil der euphorische Musiker an seine Stelle gesetzt ist, so daß es ihn nun nicht mehr geben darf.<sup>24</sup>

Blake, it seems, is introduced as another model, as an openly mentioned Nietzschean *alter ego*. This seems all the more convincing since twentieth-century scholarship has often seen him as a forerunner of Nietzsche, and although Thomas Mann made no remarks about the parallels, he was obviously aware of them.

<sup>20</sup> Klaus Mann, *André Gide and the Crisis of Modern Thought*, (New York, 1943), p. 192f. cf. also W. Pache, "Blake's seltsame Poesien: Bildzitat und Bildwirkung in Thomas Manns *Doktor Faustus*", in: *Arcadia*, 8, (1973), pp. 146ff.

<sup>21</sup> *Tagebücher 1940-1943*, p. 566.

<sup>22</sup> Jakob E. Poritzky, *Dämonische Dichter* (München, 1921), pp. 12f. (my translation), cf. also Ulla Hofstaetter, "Dämonische Dichter: Die literarischen Vorlagen für Adrian Leverkühns Kompositionen im Roman *Doktor Faustus*", in: Hans Wißkirchen (ed.), "Die Beleuchtung, die auf mich fällt, hat ... oft gewechselt.": *Neue Studien zum Werk Thomas Manns* (Nürnberg, 1991), pp. 165ff.

<sup>23</sup> Poritzky, p. 149f. (my translation).

<sup>24</sup> *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. XI, p. 165.

Taking over the image of Blake conveyed in his two sources, Thomas Mann apparently saw Blake as a demonically inspired visionary and took at face value Blake's ironic self-portrayal in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. It is therefore interesting to see that in the edition of Blake presented to him by Auden, which was certainly the edition used when writing the novel, apart from the poems actually selected, Thomas Mann extensively marked sections of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, especially "The Voice of the Devil" and "Proverbs of Hell".

If Walter Pache<sup>25</sup> claims that Blake's aphorisms are not directly echoed in the novel, this is certainly true, but the suggestive parallels must not be overlooked. Anthony Riley remarks that the "voice of Blake's Devil would certainly have been appropriate "Stärkungslektüre" for Mann when planning Leverkühn's dialogue with Mephistopheles."<sup>26</sup> Additionally, the "Proverbs", when read with Mann's novel in mind, cannot fail to strike the reader as associatively very close at hand.

As a chiffre in the novel, Blake (in the understanding of him Mann derived from his sources) exemplifies Thomas Mann's view of the demonically inspired artist, who, to use Blake's image of Milton, is "of the devil's party", very much in line with Mann's views expounded in his Dostojewski-essay quoted above.

As for Keats as a chiffre, his role in Mann's conception is more easily explained. He may be taken as the archetypal Romantic genius. A theory of artistic creativity less indebted to Nietzsche than Thomas Mann's would most likely speak of an unfortunate case; a young, extraordinarily gifted poet at the height of his powers falls ill with tuberculosis and dies. To any Nietzschean, however, Keats serves as a wellcome example of the inspiring powers of disease. Taking up Goethe's equation again, he might therefore be placed with Schiller and Novalis as a reflective, subjective, pathological, Romantic and, in order to use the Nietzschean term again, Dionysian artist, the latter seems all the more justified if one considers the multiplicity of allusions to intoxicating substances and the related sensualist images in just the poems Thomas Mann selected for his novel. How very befitting that Keats should have died in Italy, the country where Leverkühn meets the devil.

It is interesting to see that Mann – who liked to see himself as the last Romantic – although he would certainly not have included himself among the pathologically inspired artists, occasionally did cultivate this productive ethics of suffering. In *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*<sup>27</sup> he tells us that the best chapters of *Lotte in Weimar* were written while he was suffering from the most agonizing bout of sciatica. Painful as this may have been, the self-stylization in terms of an inspiration through suffering does seem rather pathetic, compared with the cases used in his essays to expound his Romantic philosophy of inspiration through suffering.

<sup>25</sup> W. Pache, *loc. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>26</sup> Riley, *loc. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, in: *Ges. Werke*, vol. XI, p. 147.

On the third level, one can analyze the function of the poems actually quoted in the novel. Here a number of suggestive motifs can be identified, which reappear in the novel.

Significantly, Leverkühn does not set to music pieces from Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, but rather two poems from the sinister *Songs of Experience*, and two poems from the Rossetti Manuscript, published posthumously in 1863.

Of these, "The Sick Rose", "A Poison Tree", and "I saw a Chapel all of Gold", are treated in chapter XX<sup>28</sup>, immediately after Leverkühn knowingly and willingly infected himself with syphilis from the mysterious prostitute, Hetaera Esmeralda. This infection motif is echoed in Blake's poem of the sick rose, the invisible worm is easily identified as a parallel to the *spirochaetes* causing the infection, which the devil refers to as "our little ones"<sup>29</sup>. On another level, the poem can be read as an account of repressed, secret and forbidden love, which turns out to be fatal, foreshadowing Adrian's love for his divinely innocent nephew Echo, who dies in agony because Adrian was not allowed to love him, since his life was to remain cold. Read in this way, the poem exemplifies the close relation between love and poison, encapsulating the motif of poisoned relationships in the novel.

Similarly, "The Poison Tree" drastically visualizes the consequence of isolation and non-communication resulting from the pact with the devil. Repressed feelings grow into "an apple bright"<sup>30</sup>, which then poisons the relationships with others. This motif of fatal silence clearly foreshadows the pact's clause that Adrian may not love and prepares for the disastrous poisoning of Adrian's relationships with the violinist Schwerdtfeger, with Marie Godeau, and with his nephew. Since the "apple bright" also invokes the biblical fall of man through satanic seduction, the poem can be seen to contain several of the key motifs developed above.

Finally, at this stage of Adrian's artistic career, he sets to music Blake's "I saw a Chapel all of Gold".

Here, a serpent forcing entry into a chapel is described, which "vomiting his poison out/On the bread and on the wine" desecrates and soils the church. The poet-persona thereupon turns away from mankind: "So I turned into a sty/And laid me down among the swine."<sup>31</sup> This forceful gesture of desperation and renunciation foreshadows the final stage of Adrian's life before his fall into mental derangement and paralysis. After the tragic death of his nephew, who, it is insinuated, dies because Adrian loved him, Adrian renounces any belief in nobility and kindness in man, by metaphorically recalling and revoking Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and its famous celebration of Schiller's "Ode to Joy". This final act of desperation in the novel reads:

»Ich habe gefunden«, sagte er [Adrian], »es soll nicht sein. «  
»Was, Adrian, soll nicht sein? «

<sup>28</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, in: pp. 220f.

<sup>29</sup> "unsere Kleinen", *Doktor Faustus*, p. 310.

<sup>30</sup> l. 10 of the poem, the novel (p. 221) gives a German paraphrase.

<sup>31</sup> The novel (p. 221) gives a German paraphrase of the poem.

»Das Gute und Edle«, antwortete er mir, »was man das Menschliche nennt, obwohl es gut ist und edel. [...] das soll nicht sein. Es wird zurückgenommen. Ich will es zurücknehmen. «

»Ich verstehe dich, Lieber, nicht ganz. Was willst du zurücknehmen? «

»Die neunte Symphonie«, erwiderte er. Und dann kam nichts mehr, wie ich auch wartete.<sup>32</sup>

The novel very subtly invites the reader to relate Adrian's composition of the poem and its gesture of despairing renunciation to his later life, for the very sentence after the description of his composition reads: "Doch das sind spätere Dinge". Superficially, this leads back to the chronological order temporarily departed from, but more subtly, it is an indication that these compositions have a bearing on Leverkühn's later life.

Having analyzed "The Sick Rose" as a poem of infection, "A Poison Tree" as one symbolically portraying emotional coldness and poisoned relationships and the "Chapel of Gold" poem as one of final resignation and desperation, it becomes obvious how carefully these poems are selected to symbolically stand for the three vital stages of Adrian's creative life, especially since the poems occur in just this order. None of these poems are quoted, they are merely summarized and partly paraphrased by the narrator Zeitblom, who describes Adrian's compositions to the reader of his biography of the composer.

At a later stage of his career, shortly after his encounter with the devil, when he has finally come to understand the uncanny foundation of his musical genius, Leverkühn sets to music a fourth poem of Blake's and the Odes of Keats.<sup>33</sup> In this context, the fourth stanza of "Silent, silent night" is quoted in the original: "But an honest joy/Does itself destroy/For a harlot coy", again echoing the willing, self-destructive infection from the prostitute, who had warned Adrian of herself. The poem, in this context, functions as an afterthought to the encounter with the devil, also recalling how Leverkühn contracted the fatal, but inspiring disease.

As for Keats, several motifs of the "Ode to a Nightingale" suggestively echo key motifs of the novel.

The nightingale as a symbol generally invokes the mythological and Ovidian<sup>34</sup> story of Philomela's metamorphosis into a nightingale, the raped woman turned into a nightingale lamenting her fate unites suffering and music. The motif of art from suffering is again invoked. The ode, and this seems to be its main function, can even be shown to parallel Leverkühn's fate: through inspiration or intoxication the subject is awakened and raised to a richer, fuller life, but this life cannot last. The parallels in the sudden fall from the heights of inspiration back to the "weariness, the fever and the fret" or – in Leverkühn's case – to insanity is rendered all the more persuasive because of the repeated references to intoxicating substances and the musical metaphors in the poem.

The "Ode on Melancholy", from the third stanza of which Zeitblom quotes in this context, also contains the motif of beauty and death intermingled: "She

<sup>32</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, p. 634.

<sup>33</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, pp. 350ff.

<sup>34</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book VI, verses 401-674.

dwells with beauty – Beauty that must die.” The very title and key theme of the ode, Melancholy, of course plays an enormous role in the novel. A reprint of Albrecht Dürer’s famous engraving *Melencholia* is in Adrian’s possession and is repeatedly referred to in the novel<sup>35</sup>, very befitting indeed for an artist like Leverkühn, who, in periods of failing inspiration suffers from bouts of depression. Furthermore, on the third page of the novel, Zeitblom uses a latin key term of Marsilio Ficino. The term *divinis influxibus ex alto* is used in Ficino’s *De Vita triplici*, a book in which the authority of Aristotle is invoked to claim that all great artists must of necessity be melancholy figures, a book Dürer can be shown to have known.<sup>36</sup> A sketchy European cultural history of Melancholy is invoked, ranging from Aristotle, via Ficino, Dürer, and Keats for the Romantics to the fictitious Leverkühn as a Nietzschean manic-depressive artist.<sup>37</sup>

In the passage<sup>38</sup> Zeitblom writes about Adrian’s compositions of Keats’ odes, several of the terms used are strikingly reminiscent of descriptions of works of the visual arts:

Es sind herrliche Stücke – und fast stumm geblieben bis heute durch die Schuld der Sprache. [...] Ich kann die Herausforderung wohl verstehen, die von der *vasenhaften Schönheit* dieser Oden auf die Musik ausgegangen war, sie zu *umkränzen*: nicht um sie vollkommener zu machen – denn sie sind vollkommen –, sondern um ihre stolze, schwermutsvolle Anmut stärker zu artikulieren und ins Relief zu treiben, dem kostbaren Augenblick ihrer Einzelheiten vollere Dauer zu verleihen [...] der griechische Adel jener britischen Bildungen ....

Here, quite clearly, a third of Keat’s famous odes is alluded to, the “Ode on a Grecian Urn”. Several critics<sup>39</sup> have identified the allusion to Keats’ poem, but the significance of the poem for the novel has not been recognized. As a work of art wrought to contain the ashes of the dead, the urn is again a symbol uniting art and death, beauty and morbidity. Finally, the poem speaks of “unheard melodies” and describes the young piper, who, though never heard, is eternalized by being graphically portrayed on the urn. This idea of unheard music and the visualization of acoustic phenomena occurs throughout the novel. The first note is struck in the third chapter, in Adrian’s childhood, when father Leverkühn shows the boys his experiments with Chladni’s sound patterns. Here, a metal plate strewn with fine sand is made to vibrate, causing the sand on the plate to form striking figures, following the sound vibrations on the plate, a kind of visualization of

<sup>35</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, pp. 125f., p. 240 and further (often veiled) references to it.

<sup>36</sup> R. Puschmann, *Magisches Quadrat und Melancholie in Thomas Mann’s ‘Doktor Faustus’*: Von der musikalischen Struktur zum semantischen Beziehungsgeflecht (Bielefeld, 1983), pp. 79-84.

<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, Schuster in his essay on Dürer’s *Melencholia* tells us that William Blake had Dürer’s *Melencholia* in his workshop; whether Thomas Mann was aware of this coincidence, we do not know. cf. K.-P. Schuster, “Das Bild der Bilder: Zur Wirkungsgeschichte von Dürer’s Melancholiekupferstich”, in: *Idea: Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle*, ed. by W. Hofmann & M. Warnke (1982), p. 72; quoted in Puschmann, p. 86.

<sup>38</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, pp. 351f., phrases in italics allude to the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (my italics).

<sup>39</sup> Puschmann, *loc. cit.*, p. 85 and Hofstaetter, *loc. cit.*, p. 173.

sound which Zeitblom explicitly calls an “experiment in visual music”.<sup>40</sup> The idea is taken up in a lecture Adrian hears on “Music and the eye”<sup>41</sup>, in which the speaker explains how composers of all ages worked visual images into their musical notations, which cannot be heard when played but can only be identified when the score is studied visually. In several instances in the novel<sup>42</sup>, it is said that Adrian’s compositions remain unheard, either because of their musical strangeness, alien to the ears of most listeners, or because of Adrian’s predilection for compositions of French and English songs. It is also remarked that Adrian’s songs exist, “are in the world”<sup>43</sup>, but only in visualized form, represented as musical notation. In the “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, which, through several verbal parallels is invoked in the passage on the other two odes, this “visual music”, as one might call it, is a recurring motif, again proving how carefully Thomas Mann selected the poems quoted and alluded to.

There does not seem to be a single poem that leaves a loose end, every allusion is tied up and interwoven with the complex whole of the novel. If it is said of Adrian’s compositions that “not a single note of the whole was unthematic”, not related to the overall structure of a piece<sup>44</sup>, then this is certainly also true of Thomas Mann’s composition in this novel.

General features of Romanticism, associations related to the poets and their work as well as individual motifs from the poems fulfil a vital function in the structural complexity of the novel and can help to elucidate Thomas Mann’s philosophy of art, again testifying to the profound impact of Romanticism on 20th century literature and thinking.

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<sup>40</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, p. 28.

<sup>41</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, pp. 83-86.

<sup>42</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, pp. 220, 244, 342, 351, 407.

<sup>43</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, p. 407.

<sup>44</sup> *Doktor Faustus*, p. 351.