

# Gynophobia and Anti-republicanism in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*

## Reflections on Adrian Leverkühn's Shakespeare Opera

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**Abstract** Why does Adrian Leverkühn choose a Shakespeare play for his major first and his first twelve-tone composition? Why in particular a Shakespeare comedy? And why, of all comedies, *Love's Labour's Lost*? Why does he start working on it in Munich? Why does his work there soon come to a halt? Why does it prosper only in Italy? And why does he eventually return to Upper Bavaria so as to complete it? Why is he said to have completed the opera exactly one hundred years ago? And why, finally, is it first performed only after the outbreak of the war and then, surprisingly, in a German adaptation? In order to answer these and similar questions, this paper sets out to re-contextualise *Doktor Faustus* with regard to discourse history and re-read the novel from a gender-theoretical perspective. The leading hypothesis is that Thomas Mann's novel belongs to the proto-history of feminist Shakespeare reception, an assumption to be substantiated through an analysis of settings, locations and the constructions of space.

**Keywords** Thomas Mann · Shakespeare · Johann Jakob Bachofen · Misogyny · Anti-republicanism · Anti-urbanism

Why is Adrian Leverkühn said to have completed his only opera exactly one hundred years ago? Why had he to start working on it in Munich? Why is it an adaption of *Love's Labour's Lost*? What precisely did Mann mean by acknowledging: 'The Shakespeare-play lies at the "core"'<sup>1</sup> [*Das Shakespeare-Stück gehört*

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<sup>1</sup> My translation. Cf. Mann (1961, 29): 'The Shakespeare play is pertinent'.

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zur “Sache” (Mann 2002, 19.1:428)]? What did he seek to emphasise by putting ‘core’ in quotation marks?

And why does Leverkühn choose a play by Shakespeare in the first place? Let us leave aside the fact that the very young Leverkühn already started to read ‘especially Shakespeare’s works’ (Mann 1997, 79) [‘namentlich ... die Werke Shakespeares’ (Mann 2002, 10.1:107)] under the ‘tutelage’ (Mann 1997, 79) [‘Einwirkung’ (Mann 2002, 10.1:107)] of his half-American teacher and was instructed by him in the ‘affinities’ (Mann 1997, 79) [‘Verwandtschaften’ (Mann 2002, 10.1:108)] between Shakespeare and Beethoven, to whom Leverkühn stands in a close relationship: The opera composer, just like Nietzsche, on whom he is even more clearly modelled than on Beethoven, has a lot in common with Shakespeare—at least with the picture of Shakespeare that Mann formed for himself on the basis of the literature that he had consulted.

Thus Frank Harris attributed a feeble constitution, similar to Leverkühn’s, to the *man* Shakespeare in his (in)famous book *The Man Shakespeare and his Tragic Life Story* (cf. Harris 1928, 392–393). Moreover, he made just as much of Shakespeare’s provincial background as, say, Stephen Greenblatt does today (cf. Harris 1928, 382–383; Greenblatt 2004, 208–209). Thus both Shakespeare and Leverkühn do not originally come from the urban sphere, where they land only in the course of their ingenious lives and from where they eventually, when their productivity ebbs, return to the rural environment where they were born. Furthermore, in Shakespeare’s *Tragic Life Story* Mann demonstrably found a bisexual love triangle of two men and a woman, like the one that unfolds in Leverkühn’s courting of Marie Godeau. This is demonstrated by exclamation marks and other markings in the margins of Mann’s copy next to the passages where Harris interprets the recurrence of this motif in the sonnets and comedies as a reflex of a biographical trauma: namely in *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (cf. Mann 2002, 19.1:432)—though *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is not one of them.

## The Libretto

Why, then, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*? *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, today still treated as ‘a young man’s play’, (Garber 2004, 186; cf. Heck and Mueller 1978, 455) was classified as Shakespeare’s very first piece in the literature that Mann consulted. To the year critics believed they knew how old the young man was when he wrote his allegedly first play. The particulars differed, as we might expect. Georg Brandes dated it as early as to Shakespeare’s twenty-seventh year (cf. Brandes 1904, 1:53). This is, of course, the exact age of Leverkühn when he writes the main parts of his first major composition.

The still very young Shakespeare is said to have achieved an in some sense very special stroke of genius with *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. For ‘the first, and perhaps for the last time’<sup>2</sup> [‘ersten (und vielleicht letzten) Mal’ (Brandes 1904, 1:53; Harris 1928,

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Johannes Ungelenk.

166)]—according to Brandes and Harris, although both of them do consider a comedy like *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in their monographs (cf. Brandes 1904, 1:265–270; Harris 1928, 157–158)—Shakespeare had invented a drama entirely on his own, without using any ‘source’<sup>3</sup> [‘Quelle’ (Hertzberg 1897, 7:259)], as is also stated in the introduction to the translation used by both Mann and Serenus Zeitblom. Leverkühn’s opera is an ingenious opus in a similarly objective sense, not only for being the first composition in twelve-tone technique. The choice of this particular drama indicates an ingeniously eccentric will to produce something unprecedented. Prior to Leverkühn no composer—at least no composer known to the author—had dared to tackle *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (cf. Stieger 1975, 2:732).

The parallels between Leverkühn’s and Shakespeare’s biographies also include the particularities of the opera and the comedy. With regard to the latter, Zeitblom, similarly to Harris, criticises the disproportion of Rosaline’s speech and her excessive characterisation by Berowne, who stylises her as a ‘dangerous female’ (Mann 1997, 231; cf. Harris 1928, 216) [‘gefährliche[s] Weibsstück[.]’ (Mann 2002, 10.1:315)], ‘one that will do the deed/Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard’; (Shakespeare 1786, 528) a passage that Mann marked in the margin of both the English original and the German translation (Shakespeare 1897, 310).

Zeitblom explains Shakespeare’s ‘mistake in art’ (Harris 1921, 220), his being ‘unconcerned with artistic consistency’ (Mann 1997, 231) [‘einem zwanghaften, um Kunstfehler unbekümmerten Drange’ (Mann 2002, 10.1:315)], on biographical grounds—as does Harris—, using the very same term for it as Harris’s German translator: ‘Kunstfehler’ (Mann 2002, 10.1:315; Harris 1928, 216). He argues that the ‘fault’ (Harris 1921, 220) originated from a personal suffering to which the author gave vent in the comedy. Shakespeare, in Brandes’s words, used Berowne ‘clearly as a mouthpiece’<sup>4</sup> [‘deutlich als Sprachrohr’ (Brandes 1904, 2:50)]. Moreover, behind the dark figure of Rosaline stands none other than ‘the dark lady of the second sonnet series’ (Mann 1997, 231) [‘die dunkle Dame der zweiten Sonettenreihe’ (Mann 2002, 10.1:315)] or, as Brandes writes in a passage again marked by Mann in the margin, ‘the distinguished superiority ... of the young, emancipated female’<sup>5</sup> [‘die vornehme Überlegenheit ... des jungen, emanzipierten Weibes’ (Brandes 1904, 2:55)]. (Incidentally, the novel manuscript reflects the controversies about the identity or identifiability of this ‘female’ literally. Mann inserted the ominous orthonym ‘Mary Fitton’ on various occasions, only to quickly cross it out again.)

It is on just this trouble spot that Leverkühn is said to have designs, on the monologues of ‘Biron-Shakespeare[.]’ (Brandes 1904, 2:49). He sets the part of Rosaline to exquisitely beautiful music to give expression to Berowne’s ‘feelings for her’ (Mann 1997, 277) [‘Gefühl für sie’ (Mann 2002, 10.1:381)]. In this way he identifies with this one male part, via this part with its author, and by the same token he identifies Rosaline with the dark type of woman who causes his personal suffering.

<sup>3</sup> Translation by Johannes Ungelenk.

<sup>4</sup> Translation by Johannes Ungelenk.

<sup>5</sup> Translation by Johannes Ungelenk.

Reaching beyond these biographical readings and at the risk of the obvious but only preliminary danger of a methodological anachronism one can, along the lines drawn by Elisabeth Bronfen (cf. Bronfen 2000, 127–129), interpret that so starkly illuminated relationship of Rosaline and Berowne gender-theoretically as part of a problem that concerns society as a whole. It threatens societal reproduction in a way that even undermines its own conditions of representation, namely by casting doubts on the conventionality of the *comedy* itself. Strictly speaking, *Love's Labour's Lost* does not really deserve this subtitle. It closes with neither marriage nor betrothal, nor finds any other kind of happy ending. It concludes with the news of a king's death, whose agony had originally started the plot by motivating the journey of the Princess of France to the King of Navarre.

The passing away of the King of France implies that the King of Navarre and his three lords do not succeed in their wooing. 'Our wooing doth not end like an old play', Berowne's last speech begins, lines that Mann underlined and marked in the margin of the translation, 'these ladies' courtesy/Might well have made our sport a comedy' (Shakespeare 1786, 626).

By exercising their power to decide the outcome of the action, against all male attempts at putting them under pressure, the ladies retain the final say with regard to the whole, as they have done in each of the dialogue skirmishes. Significantly, the last great speech is given to a lady, in fact to the one whom Zeitblom, like Brandes or Harris, suspects to be modelled on a woman overwhelmingly powerful in her relation to the author. In laying down the law in twelve lines—all marked by Mann in the margin—Rosaline imposes a twelve-month trial on her wooer to break his pride.

On a more general note the ladies are here superior to the men from the very start as a consequence of their social status as indicated by the later lists of roles. As 'Princess of France' and 'Ladies, attending the Princess' they represent a more powerful country than a 'King of Navarre' and his lords (Shakespeare 1786, 531); moreover, the kingdom of Navarre was to merge into the empire from which the Princess and her ladies originate, and into Spain (cf. Safra and Aguilar-Cauz 2007, 8:565; Ploetz 2008, 564, 570, 573, 998; Leroy 1993, 6:1060–1061).

The representative of this monarchy and great power does not fare any better after the Spanish Armada has been disastrously defeated by an unmarried queen's fleet, Mary Fitton counting amongst the entourage of this very queen. The Spaniard has to be counted amongst the losers and duped lovers: Don *Adriano* de Armado, who tellingly bears the same name as Mann's German composer and for whom his namesake will extend the instrumentation of the orchestra by 'a second pair of horns' (Mann 1997, 233) ['ein zweites Paar Hörner' (Mann 2002, 10.1:317)].

Skipping the gawks among the lower parts: it is not only all the male characters of the piece who are more or less lamentable—probably the least the French messenger Mercade or perhaps Boyet, the albeit effeminate (cf. Woudhuysen 1998, 35–36) lord of the Princess, humiliated by her on the very first occasion, both of whom, in turn, would stand for *her* superiority—; on the contrary, it is also the heroic figures from whom the master narratives of patriarchy are produced who are rendered ridiculous. In the first act this laughingstock of a Spaniard compares himself repeatedly with Hercules and Samson. Yet his self-comparisons are not

utterly senseless, for the heroism of both the Greek and the biblical hero suffered damage from their debasing infatuation with a woman: Hercules with Queen Omphale, Samson with Delilah, a primal scene of sadomasochistic degradation introduced via gramophone record in the chapters of *Doctor Faustus* set in Munich (cf. e.g. von Sacher-Masoch 1997, 88).

The whole comedy ends with a similar humiliation of a whole *catalogue* of heroes, of the Nine Worthies, and in this way it ends before it ceases to be a comedy at all: 'Worthies, away. The scene begins to cloud' (Shakespeare 1786, 621). In order to override the piteous figures that he and his peers have just cut, the courtier Berowne enforces this comical finale, supported by the Princess and against the will of the King, by means of a *mise en abîme*: 'To have one show worse than the king's and his company' (Shakespeare 1786, 614). Laughingstocks, of whom Adriano is still the noblest, are supposed to represent the Nine Worthies, in two shifts and with several mix-ups; all in all battering the authority of the represented idols of manliness. Pompey-Pompion the Great becomes only 'the Big' (Shakespeare 1786, 615) ['den Dicken' (Shakespeare 1897, 366)]. Alexander-Alisander, to whom Plutarch ascribed an exquisitely pleasing odour, stinks (Shakespeare 1786, 616). His heraldic animal comes to sit on a 'close-stool' (Shakespeare 1786, 616). And 'Jud-as' (Shakespeare 1786, 618) Maccabaeus, Ajax, 'a jakes' (Shakespeare 1786, 616, fn.; cf. Shakespeare 2012, 163, fn.), or the Holy George are more or less literally dragged through the mud as well.

Where the farcical comedians achieve more than merely presenting their roles, this does not extend beyond their subjecting themselves to a woman. Costard-Pompey lays his arms 'before the legs' (Shakespeare 1786, 615) of the Princess. Adriano-Hector prays to her slipper, '[l]oves her by the foot' (Shakespeare 1786, 619) instead of 'by the yard' (Shakespeare 1786, 619).

It is no coincidence that we also find such theatrical fictions of the second order in the Munich salon scenes of *Doctor Faustus*. There, 'a quite rotund man with pincenez' 'would blast Siegfried's endless and rather dull smithy songs' accompanied by a rather foolish 'Herr von Riedesel', whose 'artistry as a pianist' is 'hardly a match for the piano reduction' (Mann 1997, 293) [ein 'dicker Mann mit Zwicker', 'Siegfrieds endlose und recht stumpfsinnige Schmiedelieder schmetter[nd]', die 'pianistischen Künste dem Klavierauszug wenig gewachsen' (Mann 2002, 10.1:403–404)]. Opposed to this are the most impressive female characters and roles, the heroic soprano Tanja Orlanda, for instance, who in her part as the adulterous Isolde causes men to cry and almost sink to their knees before her.

## The Locations of the Composition

Why in Munich? In the Munich of *Doctor Faustus* the illusionary toppled order of the sexes mirrors, as in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the circumstances in which the intradiegetic fictions of playing gramophone records or of chamber music opera performances are embedded. Here, too, there are no happy endings, men cut piteous figures, hardly any of them succeeds in entering into matrimony and fathering children, let alone sons and male heirs. As becomes apparent at the outbreak of the

war, practically all of them are in less than good health. In a reciprocal relation to that, and this especially since the outbreak of the war, Munich is amply supplied with strong women, economically independent, sexually proactive, physically violent.

By tackling at this very place a piece that ends with the death of a patriarch and which directly presupposes his agony, a piece that erodes the mythical-ideological foundations of patriarchal authority and one in which only the men are laughed at, Leverkühn becomes the seismographer of the society which has inspired him to write his opera. To this task he is called like no other:

Leverkühn is a mother's boy. He never escapes from his mother fixation, nor from the fixation that his mother in the end literally urges upon him. His thwarted attempt at suicide is a vain attempt to rescue himself from this ineradicable fixation; not to mention the early version of the *Nachschrift*, where the mother of sorrows ['Schmerzensmutter' (Mann 2002, 10.2:1035)] was to humiliate 'the son that happened to fall to her again'<sup>6</sup> [den 'ihr wieder zugefallenen Sohn' (Mann 2002, 10.2:1036)] even more deeply.

His Oedipus complex manifests itself above all in his one and only and very suspiciously clumsy attempt at eluding the role of the son in the way that society provides for, in the very love triangle à la Shakespeare, in the failure of his wooing. The name of the person wooed speaks volumes. *Marie* Godeau, like *Mary* Fitton (or *Mary* Shakespeare-Arden, the author's mother), bears the name of the mother *par excellence*. She also resembles Leverkühn's mother down to the hair and the 'material' (Mann 1997, 440)<sup>7</sup> ['Material' (Mann 2002, 10.1:609)] of her voice.

In a similar vein, Leverkühn's landladies begin more and more to resemble Elsbeth Leverkühn, above all 'Mother Manardi' (Mann 1997, 413) ['Mutter Manardi' (Mann 2002, 10.1:569)] and *Else* Schweigestill, who is also directly addressed as 'Mother' (e.g. Mann 1997, 247) ['Mutter' (e.g. Mann 2002, 10.1:337)]. It is only under the care of these mothers that Leverkühn finishes his composition. He began it as the lodger of earlier mother figures: The work was conceived in the apartment of a motherly 'fat landlady' (Mann 1997, 149) ['dicken ... Vermieterin' (Mann 2002, 10.1:205)] in Leipzig; and work on it began in the female household of the widow Rodde in Munich, who, as Mann confessed in his letters on more than one occasion (cf. Mann 1981, 3:98–99, 115–117, 142; Mann 2002, 10.2:495–496), was modelled on his own mother.

The genesis of the Shakespeare opera thus virtually pulls the composer down into the *realm of the mothers*. The stages of the work's genesis are, without exception, set on ground floors. Whereas the storey where the henceforth notorious *subtenant* resided in Halle had still remained undefined, the father-associated places of his early years had been placed high: He was born in the upper storey of a farm near the village of *Oberweiler*, where a lime tree, always protected by the fathers against the utilitarianism of their sons, stood for patriarchy in good order. As a grammar-school pupil he inhabited a mansard in his paternal uncle's house, patrilineally inherited, where, *expresso hoc verbo*, 'patriarchal' (Mann 1997, 44) conditions prevailed

<sup>6</sup> Translation by Johannes Ungelenk.

<sup>7</sup> No emphasis in the original.

['patriarchalischerweise' (Mann 2002, 10.1:62)]. The town in which the house is situated even bears a patriarchal authority expressly in its name, 'Kaisersaschern'.

The literally descending path of Leverkühn's life leads the composer further and further into foreign parts—the opera will only begin to prosper in Italy, at maximal distance from that lime, to Mann the most German of trees (cf. Mann 2002, 5.1:985)—; this estrangement from his rural-paternal roots also leads him into ever larger towns and cities, where men 'of finest German stamp' (Mann 1997, 15) ['besten deutschen Schlages' (Mann 2002, 10.1:23)], as his father had been, were said to be 'scarcely ever' (Mann 1997, 15) found ['wie er in unseren Städten kaum noch begegnet' (Mann 2002, 10.1:23)]. After his stay in Halle, explicitly 'not a metropolis' and 'a large city' at most (Mann 1997, 101) ['wenn auch keine Großstadt, so doch eine große Stadt' (Mann 2002, 10.1:137)], which had been reminiscent of the confusingly similar town of Kaisersaschern, Leverkühn decides on the opera at Leipzig, the first metropolis of his life. He equates this city, which grew faster than any other in the German Empire, with an infamous metropolis of the Orient, Nineveh, only to short-circuit its anachronistically exaggerated number of inhabitants with its ill-famed dialect, as a 'devilish' (Mann 1997, 149) ['teuflich' (Mann 2002, 10.1:205)] degeneracy of the *sermo patrius* to a 'mouthful of impudence and wickedness times seven hundred thousand' (Mann 1997, 149) ['Sieben-hundert-tausend-Mann-Frechheit' (Mann 2002, 10.1:205)].

In the capital of Bavaria, the southernmost great city of the German Empire, which at the time was about the same size as Leipzig (cf. Reulecke 1985, 203) and which Mann once planned to make the subject of a 'metropolitan novel'<sup>8</sup> ['Großstadt-Roman' (Mann 2002, 21:342)]—he has indeed thoroughly exploited the material he had gathered for this project in *Doctor Faustus*—in Munich, as far from his home as possible within the borders of the empire, Leverkühn writes the 'piano sketch' for the 'expository scenes' (Mann 1997, 224) ['Klavierskizze der exponierenden Szenen' (Mann 2002, 10.1:307)]: He writes it with the engraving of a Jewish and according to Nietzsche deeply *un-German* (Nietzsche 1980, 690) opera composer with a half-Italian name on the wall behind him, Giacomo Meyerbeer; or else in front of an 'oil painting ... picturing the Golden Horn' (Mann 1997, 210) ['Ölgemälde ..., welches das Goldene Horn ... darstellte' (Mann 2002, 10.1:285)], that is to say another oriental metropolis, which at the time already contained more inhabitants than Leipzig and Munich taken together. It is only in the countryside around Munich, however, that Leverkühn finishes his opera 2 or 3 years later. Yet as his Munich landlady is said to have followed him there with all her household effects, he achieves this completion again in the immediate vicinity of the 'Golden Horn' (Mann 1997, 344) ['Goldenen Horn' (Mann 2002, 10.1:475)], as the painting is now called, abbreviatingly referring to what it displays.

However, the completion of the work is nevertheless *de facto* situated in the countryside, just as it had begun to flourish in Palestrina, away from the cities of Italy. The whole 'winter in Rome' (Mann 1997, 226)<sup>9</sup> ['Winter in Rom' (Mann 2002, 10.1:307)], on the other hand, which interrupts Leverkühn's stay 'in the Sabine

<sup>8</sup> Translation by Johannes Ungelenk.

<sup>9</sup> Translation altered by Johannes Ungelenk.

mountain hamlet' (Mann 1997, 226)<sup>10</sup> ['in dem sabinischen Bergnest' (Mann 2002, 10.1:307)], is only briefly mentioned, although the eternal city was at that time only marginally smaller than the city of Munich, where Leverkühn is said to have begun and in whose vicinity he supposedly finished the composition a hundred years ago.

### The Time of the Composition and its Performance

Why one hundred years ago? The escape to Preneste-Palestrina, where the composition of the opera progresses so effortlessly 'on the ground floor' (Mann 1997, 227) ['zu ebener Erde' (Mann 2002, 10.1:308)] and under the protection of mother Manardi, a 'matron of the Roman type' (Mann 1997, 227) ['stattliche Matrone römischen Typs' (Mann 2002, 10.1:309)], raises a question, the answer to which can also be found at that place 'on the ground floor'. The archaeological 'remains' (Mann 1997, 226) ['Trümmer[]' (Mann 2002, 10.1:308)] Zeitblom briefly mentions in passing must have belonged to a ritual site, where in prehistoric times a female goddess was worshipped. Known today as a sanctuary of the Fortuna Primigenia (cf. e.g. Merz 2001), in Mann's times (cf. Kerényi 1963, 89), especially according to Heinrich Mann's literary adaptation, the site was supposed to be a 'Temple of Venus'<sup>11</sup> ['Venustempel' (Mann 1951, 3:51)]. Venus-Aphrodite and her primordial cult now point to a theoretical frame inside which the details of the opera and its history can be joined to form a whole: the domination of women, the proximity to the earth of the locations of composition, their orientalisising estrangement and their partially metropolitan character.

This frame was laid out by Johann Jakob Bachofen, whose cultural theory belongs to the prehistory of feminism, which legitimises the attempt at taking an *avant la lettre* gender-theoretical interest in *Love's Labour's Lost* as the basis for Leverkühn's opera. Within Bachofen's theoretical framework, Aphrodite stands for the beginning, yet also the end, of a development whose traces he believed to recognise in the institution of the Roman matron, for instance. The course of civilisation, he claimed, led from chthonic hetaerism via matriarchy and Amazon society to patriarchy, a cultural achievement of the occident alone, such as Bachofen found in the Roman Empire. Conversely, he identified in democracy and republicanism the return of a hetaeric universal equality, a quasi re-orientalisation of the occident, which he himself, unlike his German adepts, did not understand as a typically metropolitan phenomenon. Thus anti-urbanism, anti-republicanism and the fear of women's emancipation could come together to form a conservative-revolutionary symbiosis in the minds of these Bachofen acolytes. One of them was Alfred Baumler, who introduced Mann to Bachofen; at a time when women's suffrage and republican concerns had appeared simultaneously in the German Empire.

Similarly, in *Doctor Faustus*, the hetaeric, gynecocratic or Amazon degeneracies of gender relations belong to the years of the Republic, when the aria of Delilah is played on a gramophone. The love triangle that is modelled on Shakespeare's

<sup>10</sup> Translation altered by Johannes Ungelenk.

<sup>11</sup> Translation by Johannes Ungelenk.



*Tragic Life Story*, and the connected story of the love triangle around Ines Institoris are republican in these senses: the continuing adultery of Ines; the daughters whom she, 'looking the other way' (Mann 1997, 347) ['abgewandten Gesichtes' (Mann 2002, 10.1:480)], conceives of her husband-'manikin' (Mann 1997, 305) ['Männchen' (Mann 2002, 10.1:420)] and who extinguish the paternal line of inheritance; the *expressis verbis* male role she usurps in relation to her lover (cf. Mann 2002, 10.1:508–509); finally her murder of him with a particularly coarse weapon as soon as he dares to reject her claim on exclusive possession of his body. Significantly, Mann postdates the trivia of a real historical scandal, the so-called tramway-murder of Dresden during the Wilhelmine era by a quarter of a century into the Weimar Republic (Anonymus 1901, 1–2).

Her gynecocratic marriage with Institoris, however, is contracted in the very first year of the war, after the 'man ... in manikin form' (Mann 1997, 347) ['Mann in Männchengestalt' (Mann 2002, 10.1:480)] had already initiated the betrothal around the last *pre-war* carnival, at about the same time as the half-theatrical Wagner performances take place. The marriage, the manikin's courting and those performances seem slightly, but significantly, premature, as it were. In order for us to understand these apparently inconsistent datings it is important to bear in mind what the war meant to Mann and what the prewar period meant to his peers.

The war, we need only look at the beginning of *Death in Venice*, had cast its shadow before it, affecting the period that is therefore occasionally called *Vorkrieg*. And the outbreak of that war which had been expected for so long would serve Mann in his speech *On the German Republic* to define or to predate the beginning of the republic as an 'inner fact'<sup>12</sup> ['innere Tatsache' (Mann 1974, 13:824)], because an egalitarian sense of community was said to have emerged in the trenches already, crossing all boundaries of rank and class (Mann 1974, 13:824).

On such a disturbed scaling of contemporary history we can now plot the dates of the genesis of Leverkühn's opera, which itself, *a limine*, regarding its Shakespearian implications, is born under the sign of a moribund monarchy. The first period of its creation, the 'nine months' (Mann 1997, 217) ['neun Monate' (Mann 2002, 10.1:296)] from autumn 1910 to 'June' (Mann 1997, 225) ['Juni' (Mann 2002, 10.1:307)] 1911, comes to take place in 'Munich at the end of the Regency' (Mann 1997, 217) ['München der späten Regentschaft' (Mann 2002, 10.1:295)]. In order to really make progress, Leverkühn has to conquer his stay-at-home disposition and leave the German Empire in a, for tourists, uncommon season, and set off to Italy, where he, like his anglophile companion, studiously avoids all things German. In the small town of Palestrina the only Germans they meet are the narrator Zeitblom and his wife. On this occasion the otherwise so discreet narrator does not miss the opportunity to confess his embarrassing thought that at this place only he and his wife consummated their marriage (cf. Mann 2002, 10.1:320–321; 10.2:989).

However, Leverkühn 'had not quite completed work' (Mann 1997, 270) ['[g]anz fertig war er ... nicht geworden' (Mann 2002, 10.1:371)] on his opera in Palestrina. His biographer takes pains to note 'that it was not by chance that the completion of

<sup>12</sup> Translation by Johannes Ungelenk.

the work and the end of his sojourn in Italy failed to coincide. Even had he consciously striven for such a coordination, a subconscious plan prevented it' (Mann 1997, 270) ['daß es nicht zufällig mit der Beendigung seines italienischen Aufenthaltes und dem Abschluß des Werkes nicht hatte stimmen wollen. Selbst wenn er bewußterweise nach dieser Koinzidenz gestrebt hatte, war sie nach heimlicher Absicht nicht zustande gekommen' (Mann 2002, 10.1:371)].

The initial isolation of the empire from the opera and its crazed gender relations is finally abandoned. The composition is finished in Germany, after 'late October' 1912 (Mann 1997, 270) ['ging der Oktober zu Ende' (Mann 2002, 10.1:372)], either during the very last days of 'the end of the Regency' or probably already under the *dairy farmer* (Milchbauer), as the less ambitious successor of the famous Luitpold was called.

The dating of Leverkühn's return home indicates that the 'subconscious' intention of this inconsistency has to do with the proximity of the war, which is to say with the republican circumstances: 'the autumn of 1912, 20 months prior to the outbreak of the ... war' (Mann 1948, 255) ['de[r] Herbst 1912, zwanzig Monate vor Ausbruch des ... Krieges' (Mann 2002, 10.1:366)]. The interval that separates the *terminus post quem* for the completion of the opera from the war is shortened by suggestively using the strangely detailed unit of months to measure a time span of about 2 years. On the other hand, the place and the time of the *beginning* of the composition had always been pre-related to the war, once again shortening the interval by almost half a decade through the suggestive implications of words: 'Munich at the end of the Regency—with *only* 4 years left until the war' (Mann 1997, 217)<sup>13</sup> ['das München der späten Regentschaft, nur vier Jahre noch vom Kriege entfernt' (Mann 2002, 10.1:295)].

Although the composition has in this way been moved closer to the war, has begun on German soil and will be finished on this soil, even if outside the metropolis, here and there something strange, un-German nevertheless keeps clinging to this opera. At least, the barbarisation of the gender difference still remains neatly dissociated from the German language: Against the resistance of his librettist the composer stubbornly keeps insisting on the text in the English original.

It is only with the actual war, the outbreak of the inner republic, so to speak, and of everything which was, according to Bachofen, linked with republicanism in terms of gender-political notions, that the German language and Germany as a whole, reaching to its rural-provincial limits, has fully acquired the maturity for the gender troubles paraded in *Love's Labour's Lost*. This is what the performance history of the opera reveals. Significantly, its premiere takes place in Germany and in an, against all odds, 'German version' (Mann 1997, 278) ['deutschen Bearbeitung' (Mann 2002, 10.1:382)], but explicitly only after the 'war had already broken out' (Mann 1997, 278) ['nach Kriegsausbruch' (Mann 2002, 10.1:382)]. More precisely, its location is not a metropolis, nor even a city like Halle, but an unmistakable model for Kaisersaschern, Lübeck of all places, at that time already famous for being Mann's and his paternal ancestors' native town, his *Vaterstadt*.

<sup>13</sup> Translation altered by Johannes Ungelenk; no emphasis in the original.

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