

‘Myth plus Psychology’ in *Death in Venice*

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Abstract:

In the twentieth century, writers turned their attention to the past and used myth in their works. It is a wrong notion to think of modernity as a rejection of tradition and just in search of novelty since there is a strong connection between modernity and tradition. Thomas Mann is different from his contemporaries in the attention he pays to the past as well as the present. This article examines the importance of the relation of Thomas Mann to both myth and psychology. The significance of the mixture between modernity and tradition, the contemporary elements and the mythological figures, myth and psychology in his masterpiece *Death in Venice* is going to be discussed.

Keywords: Mythology, Psychoanalysis, Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*, Aschenbach

Introduction

Tradition is the foundation of modernity and in this way, modernity, with all its quest for novelty and its dreams about new ways of being, is dependent on the past. In the nineteenth century, romantic revivals of the Middle Ages flourished in Europe and historiography paved its way through many works of literature. It began with Giambattista Vico’s discovery of the myth as the element of novelty fully expressed in his *Scienza Nuova* or the *New Science*. He has studied philosophy, philology, and classics that had great influence on his views about history, historiography, and their close connection with culture. Johann Gottfried Herder was another influential figure whose works and ideas are fully represented in German Romanticism. It is noteworthy here to mention Sigmund Freud and his insistence on the importance of our past and the danger of our refusal to remember our own preconscious past. In his poems the German poet and essayist Gottfried Benn shows his pessimism and a sense of “history fatigue, a weariness of historicism” (Hollweck, 2006: 2) written one year just before the catastrophe of European civilization: “O dass wir unsere Urahnen wären. / Ein Klümpchen Schleim in einem warmen Moor” (“oh, to be

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one of our earliest ancestors/ A clump of slime who basks in steamy moors” (qtd. in Hollweck, 2006: 2). Rejection of civilization led the historians of the nineteenth century to find in the past something which ended up with “illusory beginnings, that are on the way of the ‘Descent into Hell,’ the Prelude to Thomas Mann’s *Joseph and His Brothers*” (Hollweck, 2-3). After 1918, the main themes in literature and art were the disruption in culture and history, the relative nature of time and “the experience of time having become lost” (Hollweck, 3). The salient examples of new understanding and definition of time and history as well as rediscovery of myth are T.S. Eliot’s *Waste Land*, Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*, and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

Theodore Ziolkowski states in his *Mode of Faith: Secular Surrogates for Lost Religious Belief*, “in Germany, the hunger for myth itself became the greatest myth of the 1920s” (2008, 281). In his letter to Robert Heilman, 1956, Eric Voegelin explains the principles of work on myth and story of soul:

What I just have adumbrated is the basis of historical interpretation since Herder and Baader and Schelling. History is the unfolding of the human Psyche; historiography is the reconstruction of the unfolding through the psyche of the historian. The basis of historical interpretation is the identity of substance (the Psyche) in the object and the subject of interpretation; and its purpose is participation in the great dialogue that goes through the centuries among men about their nature and destiny. (qtd. in Hollweck, 2006: 14)

In his letters to Karl Kerenyi, the Hungarian anthropologist, Thomas Mann emphasized myth and psychology, in his terms “Mythos plus Psychologie”, as his natural and significant “Element” (von Gronicka, 1956: 191). For Thomas Mann, myth means more than what the term conventionally refers to. It includes history, legend, and all literary traditions of past; there are no instances of colloquial and commonplace in its language, marked by lyric pathos and recalls the monumental and the well-proportioned statements. Psychology refers to the analysis of the reality of psycho-physical world. He coins the formula “myth plus psychology” in his greatest work *Joseph and His Brothers*, retelling the familiar stories of Genesis from Jacob to Joseph and setting it in the historical context of the Amarna Period. Yet, this combination of myth and psychology lost its vitality and propinquity. This loss is because of the fact that its plot is derived from legend, myth, and ancient history instead of the obvious reality of the contemporary time and its realization is an intentional act of deception. The other reason is the “purposefulness of the rationalization and humanization ... of myth with the help of psychology” (von Gronicka, 1956: 192). The third reason is the amplification of irony and author’s playfulness in his attitude toward his material. However, such vitality exists in *Death in*

Venice and everything in the novella is rooted in myth and legend as well as present-day literature, containing stereotypes of both myth and modern literature delving into psycho-physical and outer-inner reality.

Thomas Mann, Myth and Psychology: (Importance of myth and psychology for Mann)

Thomas Mann presents the change in the notion of time and history in his works. In his *The Magic Mountain* (1924) he defined his hero Hans Castorp in this way: “It is his story, and not every story happens to everybody. This story, we say, belongs to the long ago; is already, so to speak, covered with historic mould, and unquestionably to be presented in the tense best suited to a narrative out of the depth of the past” (v). In his essay “Frederick and the Grand Coalition”, Mann alluded to the Prussian King Frederick the Great while describing the political situation of Germany. Likewise, in his *Buddenbrook* and *Death in Venice* Mann wrote about the histories of a decline; in the first one, it is the decline of a family and the death of the son of the family, Hanno, and in the latter, it is the decline and grief of Gustav Aschenbach, nineteenth century novelist, while pursuing the love of the young Tadzio.

In an essay of 1933 Jan Assmann, the Egyptologist, pointed to the influence of Mann’s Joseph novels, essays, and lectures on our understanding of myth and cultural memory and stated that experts in this field have not paid attention to Thomas Mann as a phenomenologist of the myth. Assmann explained the connectedness of psychology and myth and emphasized that Mann’s fascination in human consciousness is related to his preoccupation with mythical recurring pattern. As Mann explains in his lecture on Freud “the age of antiquity and its consciousness of itself were different from our own, less exclusive, less sharply defined. It was, as it were, open behind; it received much from the past and by repeating it gave it presents again” (qtd. in Hellweck, 2006: 15). He insists on myth reanimation and believes that life can find self-awareness only through myth, focusing on the importance of myth and past in the present.

Hannelore Mundt’s *Understanding Thomas Mann* gives useful information about the life and works of Thomas Mann and the ambiguities of his writings. She also points to the different aspects of Thomas Mann’s works that refer to contemporary concerns and problems, for example the tension between individualism and social conventions. She also elucidates how Mann’s personal issues such as his conflict with his repressed homosexual desires are manifested in his novels and shows how these matters are used in larger social and political frameworks. The presence of some recurrent themes in Mann’s

works throughout his writing career shows his contribution to the modern style of novel writing. Some of the important themes are the relation between morality and knowledge, the everlasting danger of irrational and yet the difficulty to resist it, the formless nature of sexuality, and the unstable nature of human being and personal identity. In his work, *Death in Venice*, Thomas Mann represents a view of life that includes both the transcendent and the real. This combination reveals itself through the portrayal of mostly realistic and naturalistic theme and style, then psychology, and finally the surreality of the demonic and diabolic. In a speech given in English on 29 May 1945 in Washington entitled “Germany and the Germans” Mann explained the relationship between the German mind and the daemonic as depicted in the story of *Doctor Faustus*. The author uses caricature, the grotesque, with apocalyptic visions and evokes the magical fairy tale world. He oscillates between reality and the surreal world to leave the reader suspended in the fluctuation of reality and magic.

This research tries to investigate Thomas Mann’s fascination with time and myth and his understanding of the past by constant self-examination as a writer and artist within the social and political context of his current society. Mann’s first preoccupation with time is shown in “The Preface” to the *Magic Mountain* in which the narrator says:

Since stories must be in the past, then the more past the better, it would seem, for them as their character as histories, and for him the teller of them, the rounding wizard of times gone by. With this story, moreover, it stands as it does to-day with human beings, not least among them writers of tales; it is far older than its years; its age may not be measured by length of days, not the weight of time on its head reckoned by the rising or setting of suns. In a word, the degree of its antiquity has no ways to do with the passage of time in which statement the author intentionally touches upon the strange and questionable double nature of that riddling element. (qtd. in Hollweck, 2006: 5-6)

The narrator of this novel, like Mann’s other narrators, has a special tone, it shifts from the tone of a realist novelist to that of an anonymous storyteller who tells the story in the past tense and who presents time as a questionable element which needs more investigation.

Thomas Mann in his *A Sketch of My Life* (1960) indicates that “these interests of today are not inappropriate taste for a time of life that may legitimately begin to divorce itself from the peculiar and individual and turn its gaze upon the typical which is, after all, the mythical” (Mann, 1960: 66). He then continues:

I do not say the conquest of the myth, from the stage of development at which we have now arrived, can ever mean a return to it. That can happen only as a result of self-delusion. The ultra-romantic denial of the development of the cerebrum, the exorcising of the mind, which seems to be the philosophical order

of the day, is not everybody's affair. To blend reason and sympathy in a gentle irony that need not be profane: a technique, an inner atmosphere of some such kind would probably be the right one to include the problem I had in mind. Myth and psychology the anti-intellectual bigots would prefer to have these two kept for apart. And yet, I thought, amusing to attempt, by means of a mythological psychology, a psychology of myth (Mann, 1960: 67).

He studies ancient works and emphasizes the interconnections between the past and the present events. He believes that "the deepest past is not past, but present at every moment" (qtd. in Hollweck, 2006: 13). His studies are not limited to the mentioned works and he read Freud. His readings reveal themselves in his fictional works and are reflected in his stories to show myth plus Freud's ideas internalized in his writings. The influential works on his writings include Alfred Jeremias' *Das Alte Testament im Lichte der Alten* (1916), Elias Auerbach's *Wüste und gelobtes Land*, Oskar Goldberg's *Die Wirklichkeit der Hebraer* (1925), and Bachofen's *Urreligion und antike Symbole* (1926).

Myth in *Death in Venice*:

Thomas Mann revives myth giving it vibrant immediacy and informs reality with myth's eternal grandeur and in his attempt to revitalize classicism he pays spherical attention to the tradition in German literature which is represented by Goethe. Mann confessed in a letter to Carl Maria Weber that he wrote *Death in Venice* after reading Goethe's novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften (Elective Affinities)* five times. Goethe's influence on Mann is represented in the love of the middle-aged Aschenbach for the youthful Tadzio which is similar to Goethe's love for the seventeen-year-old Ulrike von Levetzow: "some sort of relation and acquaintanceship was perforce set up between Aschenbach and the youthful Tadzio; it was with a thrill of joy the older man perceived that the lad was not entirely unresponsive to all the tender notice lavished on him" (Mann, 1954: 50), and Aschenbach's love is explicitly shown: "he whispered the hackneyed phrase of love and longing-impossible in these circumstances, absurd, abject, ridiculous enough, yet sacred too, and not unworthy of honour even here: 'I love you!'" (*Ibidem*: 52). Mann introduces a unique case and at the same time he raises this unique case to the typical making it universal and eternal since Aschenbach, like any lover, tries his best to reach his beloved and wants to solve the problem of their age:

Like any lover, he desired to please; suffered agonies at the thought of failure, and brightened his dress with smart ties and handkerchiefs and other youthful touches. He added jewellery and perfumes and spent hours each day over his toilette, appearing at dinner elaborately arrayed and tensely excited. The

presence of the youthful beauty that had bewitched him filled him with disgust of his own aging body. (Mann, 1954: 69)

Thomas Mann in his “Sketch of my Life” written in 1930 stated that, before writing *Death in Venice*, he has never experienced “such a splendid sensation of uplift” (Mann, 1994: 117). *Death in Venice* portrays the author’s intelligent mind as a powerful combination of precisely studied and recorded world of contemporary and the immortal and infinite world of legend and man’s cultural heritage. Such effort makes *Death in Venice* a unique work of symbolism of myth and the psychological realism. Thomas Mann creates the modern Venice using up-to-date idiom and technical terms along with foreign loan-words and phrases, notably French. He integrates such modern pictures of Venice with exotic elements as fashioned by the imagination of Elizabethan poets and dramatists as well as Italian novelists. Such mingling and montage of classical and modern, reality and literary tradition empowers Mann and enables him to superimpose the world of classical antiquity, historical figures including gods of Olympus in a modern setting.

Furthermore, as we can see in his political writings during and after World War I and especially in his *Reflections on a Non-Political Man* (1918), war and political events have changed this non-political writer into a political one and permanent member of the political discussions such as the Weimar Republic. As Richard White in his *Love, Beauty, and Death in Venice* stated “even though the story is set in what was then contemporary Venice, Mann emphasizes the perennial nature of the themes and issues that he considers by using imagery and allusion to evoke the mythical atmosphere of ancient Greece and by dwelling upon the classical parallels to Aschenbach’s own obsession” (1990: 53). The essential Socratic elements in *Death in Venice* include the beautiful youth, the older lover, and the erotic atmosphere of the city of Venice itself: “this was Venice, this the fair frailty that fawned and that betrayed, half fairy-tale, half snare; the city in whose stagnating air the art of painting once put forth so lusty a growth, and where musicians were moved to accords so weirdly lulling and lascivious” (Mann, 1954: 55–56). After falling in love with the young Tadzio, Aschenbach repeats the Socratic claim that corporeal beauty pulls us out of our attachment to the world and its pleasures and reminds us of the spiritual realm. He uses Tadzio’s body and his beauty as a catalyst for his artistic powers and for him, as for Socrates, his beloved’s beauty is supposed to lead to the spiritual achievement. As Mann tells us, he “fashioned his little essay after the model Tadzio’s beauty set: that page and a half of choicest prose, so chaste, so lofty, so poignant with feeling, which would shortly be the wonder and admiration of the multitude” (1954: 46). But the final judgment of the novel is in opposition to Plato’s claim



and depicts how the love for beauty can lead to moral disintegration and death.

There exist creatures both of this world and from beyond. Even when they are not of this world, they move in the bright light of reality and their existence is supported by the realistic atmosphere of their surroundings in spite of bringing magic and dreamlike quality. Thomas Mann portrays life as a repetition of mythical patterns. Such view is created in Aschenbach's confrontation with the stranger in his different guises. To study the characters of the novella, we should pay attention to three significant and main figures: the stranger in his different guises, Gustav von Aschenbach, and Tadzio.

The Stranger

The stranger in the cemetery symbolizes Hermes with his straw hat and ironed-tipped cane, seeming as a messenger of upcoming death. His appearance is characterized in a manner which makes the reader to remember an official identification, terse, and exact in its phrasing. Meanwhile, we find out that the stranger who is much more than commonplace reality gains a stereotype reality and becomes a mythical figure. He reveals himself in different characters, once the tempter Satan, then an oppressive merciless emancipator from life's entanglement, and sometimes Death with his specific mask. The influence the stranger has upon Aschenbach is powerful yet depicted in a realistic manner. For example, the stranger's gaze does not make Aschenbach surrender or cast down upon his curved knees with arms spread wide and his head thrown back because such strange reaction shows the absurdity of all abnormality according to Thomas Mann's worldview and his style of writing. Along with physical description, Thomas Mann then turns to the psychological plane and masterly analyzes the effect of Aschenbach's meeting with the stranger upon his psyche: "his heart throbbed to the drums, his brain reeled, a blind rage seized him, a whirling lust..." (1954: 68). This is Mann's peculiar style of writing that in spite of giving a picture of complete realism, he uses myth and legend in their believable existence.

Tadzio

The young Polish boy, Tadzio, also symbolizes two worlds of reality and myth. It is in Aschenbach's imagination that Tadzio is likened to the immortal beings of Greek mythology. Such identification of Tadzio with mythological figures can be described rationally and realistically as an illusion of Aschenbach's imagination as he "noticed with astonishment the lad's perfect beauty. His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture-pale, with a sweet reserve, with clustering

honey-coloured ringlets, the brow and nose descending in one line, the winning mouth, the expression of pure and godlike serenity” (Mann, 1954: 25). Mann’s evocation of the figures of myth and their identification with Tadzio is so vivid that we receive them tangible and realistic. It is the reader’s responsibility to distinguish the real boy from the mythical divine figures. Neither Tadzio as the young handsome Polish boy nor Tadzio as the mythological figure are dependent on each other, but are related and identified with each other and eventually are used to offer what Mann has in mind, the embodiment of beauty’s fatal allurements for the artist. He is Aschenbach’s tempter into the several deliriums, symbol of Dionysus, who leads him into limitlessness and the bliss of Nirvana, yet at the same time, is contradictory to this role being symbol of harmony, balanced, measured, and limited state of form, the embodiment of Apollonian standard. Therefore, Tadzio is both the inspiration and challenge to Aschenbach’s creative desire. Thomas Mann creates a kind of mysterious synthesis in the figure of Tadzio who is like us, human and real with all the flaws and failings, and at the same time higher than us, in mythological realm, whose existence is beyond time and space. In this regard, Mann creates a mixture of psychology and myth in the character of Tadzio.

Tadzio with his red knot is similar to three characters in the novel: the red-haired man on the steps of the morgue chapel, the gondolier, and the red-haired wandering musician who, like Tadzio, pilots Aschenbach. The difference between these three characters and Tadzio is that they are satanic and Tadzio is both innocent and corrupted who leads to both his salvation and death. The red tie Tadzio usually wore along with the testicular, overripe red strawberry symbolizes the passion which leads to Aschenbach’s decline and final death. Tadzio symbolizes Hyacinthus who has been beaten and humiliated by his friend Jaschu (as Zephyrus) while Aschenbach (Apollo) was watching him seating on his beach chair. Tadzio is identified with different mythological figures and transforms into different roles during the novel. As Frank in his “Mann’s Death in Venice” describes, “he is described as having the head of Eros” (1986: 31), then symbolizes Narcissus falling in love with himself and in another occasion when he wrestles with Jaschu resembles Hyacinthus and more interestingly parallels Hermes, the “psychogog” when he beckons Aschenbach out to sea. Aschenbach also refers to Tadzio as “little Phaeax” (Mann, 1954: 29) symbolizing the Phaeacian sailor who pilots Theseus’ ship. Venice with its labyrinth streets and canals is like a maze in which Theseus, who resembles the character of Aschenbach, cannot find his way. The minotaur is the plague, cholera, which was destroying Venice and Aschenbach follows the clues throughout this labyrinth to find out the truth about it. His passion is another minotaur which he was in search of, yet different from Theseus, he is destroyed

once he finds it: “he bought some strawberries. They were overripe and soft; he ate them as he went” (Mann, 1954: 71). This line predicts his decline and ultimate demise.

Aschenbach

The same tension between reality and myth can be found in characters and his depiction fluctuates between exaltation and humiliation, between grandiloquence and degradation, between two poles of detachment and empathy. Thomas Mann describes Aschenbach’s vacation in Venice in a realistic way and at the same time quotes passages from Homer’s *Odyssey*. It drives the reader to think of coexistence of myth and reality and attempt to distinguish between mythological and real setting. This shows an excellent example of sophistication in Thomas Mann’s creation which would certainly be well-received and enjoyed by a delicate reader.

This polarized style of writing is typical of Thomas Mann as well as his basic definition of protagonist as an unheroic, and heroism as heroism of weakness. He depicts such heroism and the paradoxical “unheroic hero” (von Gronicka, 1956: 202) in a realistic description and psychoanalysis study of his character. He is associated with Greek and Christian figures like Socrates and Saint Sebastian. They are brought down from their lofty status and represent a man of mature wisdom with un-Grecian pathos. There are references to Socrates/ Phaedrus relationship showing the Platonic love between an older guru and a younger disciple: “Here Socrates held forth to youthful Phaedrus upon the nature of virtue and desire, wooing him with insinuating wit and charming turns of phrase” (Mann, 1954: 45).

In his *Death in Venice: Making and Unmaking a Master*, T.J. Reed studies the clash of narratives in the mythic mode and the realistic mode and represents the novel as “a complex story about complex issues” (1994: 88). He explains how the protagonist, Aschenbach, while living a real world, is overwhelmed by Dionysian impulses when “one night, returning late from Venice, he paused by his beloved’s chamber door in the second storey, leaned his head against the panel, and remained there long, in utter drunkenness, powerless to tear himself away, blind to the danger of being caught in so mad an attitude” (Mann, 1954: 56). Reed explains that Mann thinks of *Death in Venice* as a will of its own, meaning that the novella writes itself, with the main character as a kind of writer that Mann wishes to be.

Bernard Frank connects Tadzio and Aschenbach to some mythical figures including “Narcissus and the pod reflecting him, Ganymede and Zeus, a Phaeacian sailor, possibly Phaeax himself, and Theseus head for the labyrinth, Phaedrus and Socrates, Hyacinthus and Apollo” (2006:

99). The gondolier who carries Aschenbach to his hotel is a devil figure who resembles Charon, a classical figure who entered Christian lore in Dante's *Inferno*, and makes a connection between Aschenbach's Christian background and his developing paganism. Aschenbach's inability to rescue Tadzio shatters his earlier dignified delusions and as Frank explains "it is this humbling and humanizing realization that frees Aschenbach to follow Tadzio/ Hermes, the Psychogog, leader of the souls into afterlife, not as a classical parallel, but as truly and solely himself, while his whole face took on the relaxed and brooding expression of deep slumber" (2006: 100).

The relationship between these mythical figures and Aschenbach can be summarized in this way that as Zeus, Socrates, or even the pool which reflects Narcissus's beauty, Aschenbach acts as a lover in charge. On the other hand, Apollo appears near the end of the novel when Aschenbach puts aside the intellect and becomes overwhelmed with passion transforming into a helpless figure in the face of fate. "Just as Aschenbach was about to spring indignantly to the rescue, Jaschui let his victim go" (Mann, 1954: 74). References to Dionysus, the god of passion and chaos, exist especially in Aschenbach's dream of the strange god that makes him move away from his former insistence on discipline and move toward intoxication and his dark side. When he finally meets his end, Tadzio acts like Hermes and leads him into the underworld.

Psychology in *Death in Venice*

Thomas Mann is universally known as an intellectual and philosophical novelist who in *The Dial* in November 1922 in his first "Letters from Germany" heralded the rise of a new type of writing he entitled the 'intellectual novel' and referred to German writers and their works: Count Hermann Keyserling's *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* (1919), Friedrich Gundolf's biography of Goethe (1916), Ernst Bertam's *Friedrich Nietzsche: An Attempt at a Mythology* (1918). But the noteworthy point is that none of these mentioned works was a work of fiction and this fact makes a distinction between Mann's novels as philosophical works and these non-fiction ones. Thomas Mann had a comprehensive knowledge of major German writers and philosophers and it is manifested in the ideas he borrowed from those figures and used in his works as part of his intellectual work. He is considered as a modern writer along with other modern novelists such as James Joyce, Proust and Kafka whose novels inaugurate new perspectives in the art of novel writing. The time Thomas Mann has started to write, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, European writers broke their link with traditional realist writing and adapted new techniques of Modernism notably stream of consciousness. Although Mann practiced the same

techniques of writing that Proust and Joyce employed, he was not completely familiar with them and their works since he was German and his works are representative of German thought and philosophy which proves that he was more familiar with great German modern writers like Rilke, Kafka, Musil, and Hesse. Mann learned from them many new conventions of novel writing including psychological characterization. In "A Message from Thomas Mann" Mann points to the cathartic effect of literature emphasizing on the imagination rather than moralizing insights and believes that "the study of literature, 'not as texts for moralizing, but through the imaginative insights it offers,' can help peoples to overcome prejudices which are in contradiction to human dignity and the respect of the individual" (1946: 287). He introduces literature as a redeemer which can lead us to understanding and love.

Thomas Mann acts like a soberly meticulous analyst and delineator of physis and psyche and creates the world of myth intermingling with modern world. This reminds us of Aschenbach's creative state of mind which can be regarded as a fragment of self-revelation on the part of the author:

author of the lucid and vigorous prose epic on the life of Frederick the Great; careful, tireless weaver of the richly patterned tapestry entitled *Maia*, a novel that gathers up the threads of many human destinies in the warp of a single idea; creator of that powerful narrative *The Subject*, which taught a whole grateful generation that a man can still be capable of moral resolution even after he has plumbed the depths of knowledge; and lastly... the writer of that impassioned discourse on the theme of *Mind and Art*. (Mann, 1954: 8)

He was an enthusiastic reader of Nietzsche and his fascination with psychoanalysis in the 1930s and in the 1920s can be rooted back to his interest in the ideas of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Wagner. In his *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man* he wrote about these important figures that attracted his attention and described them as "a triad of eternally united spirits." Mann's view of Romanticism was a contradictory one. On the one hand, he rejects the association of Romanticism with death and the dangerous irrationalism inherent in Romanticism. On the other hand, he felt sympathy with Romanticism and its expression of human inner condition. In "Culture and Socialism" (1928), he rejected the traditional intellectualism in Germany since it was unable to help the mind go forward and he substitutes that with the forward-looking nature of Romanticism. Romanticism with its philosophical ideas as well as literary form penetrated into Mann's works and he inherited from German Romanticism "as awareness of the symbolic nature of the physical world..., and a sensibility for mystical and transcendent aspects of experience" (Travers, 1992: 128). In his novel, *Death in Venice*, those ghostly figures who forewarn

Aschenbach's failing and final death are not realistic characters yet at the same time are much more than his imagination. The novel examines the blatantly sexual desires. Author's mixture of artistic and erotic discourses shows that Aschenbach's search for beauty is physical and it is in his perception and consciousness, according to Mann's idea of 'psychic reality', that the interweaving aesthetic and erotic desire is obvious.

In his first lecture on Sigmund Freud entitled "Freud's Position in the History of Modern Thought" (1929), Thomas Mann gave his comment on Nietzsche's two aphorisms. His remarks in psychoanalysis and Freud's theories oriented from his interest in unconscious part of human than in the conscious mental life. Mann recognizes the association between Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, and German Romanticism with its rejection of rationalism, intellectualism, and classicism. He believes that psychoanalysis is revolutionary and focuses on black side of human soul and passion in opposition to rationality and psychoanalysis as new forms of research. In fact, it was Freud who explained to Mann, in his letter on 29 November 1926, the relationship between Napoleon and the biblical figure of Joseph who had been a mythical model for the former as a secret devilish force behind Napoleon's complex career. Mann also used Jung's ideas in his work in different ways and it is even clear that Jung's influence on Mann was much greater than Freud's. Mann borrows his notion of collective unconscious, one of the significant Jungian ideas, and uses it as a kind of cultural unconscious in his work, *Death in Venice*: "He is fortunate indeed, if, as sometimes happens, the disease, after a slight malaise, takes the form of a profound unconsciousness, from which the sufferer seldom or never rouses" (1954: 64). He explains the notion of collective self as "a realm where the borders between the ego and the cosmos are opened, and the ego loses itself and mixes itself up" (qtd. in Bishop, 2004: 35). Aschenbach was the son of bourgeois father and a bohemian mother and for many years he has struggled to get rid of the bohemian aspects of his nature and as Deb states in his "Freudian Psychoanalytic Reading of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*: The Clash of Id, Ego and Superego" the protagonist of the novella "after years of living a morally and artistically ascetic life dominated by reason, social courtesy, rigid outlook and discipline, Aschenbach finds himself afflicted with writer's block" (2016: 83). He used to live a life of restraint and reason and was:

too busy with the tasks imposed upon him by his own ego and the European soul, too laden with the care and duty to create, too preoccupied to be an amateur of the gay outer world, he had been content to know as much of the earth's surface as he could without stirring far outside his own sphere-had, indeed, never even been tempted to leave Europe. (Mann, 1954: 6)

In the cemetery in Munich, he visited an exotic-looking man that disturbed him and he was seized by a desire to travel to the exotic places and this was the reason he ultimately reached Venice. His desire to travel to the exotic Venice is confronted with his status as an artist who is supposed to alienate himself from all kinds of outward pleasures and to stay away from his internal base desires. From the beginning of the novella the conflict between id and superego is obvious in the character of Aschenbach. We can find the battle between antagonistic desires in his inner self. It includes impulse versus repression or exuberance versus restraint which makes Aschenbach be stuck between these contradictory forces of superego and id. At times, he desires to transgress the restraint and rules of the society as it is explained by Mann: “This yearning for new and distant scenes, this craving for freedom, release, forgetfulness they were, he admitted to himself, an impulse towards flight, flight from the spot which was the daily theatre of a rigid, cold, and passionate service” (1954: 6-7). These desires to fly and flee from the restraint of social life which had been repressed since his childhood and limited him in his life as a gentleman now overwhelm him and this battle between id and superego is depicted when he is alone in his house:

He dreaded the summer in the country, alone with the maid who prepared his food and the man who served him; dreaded to see the familiar mountain peaks and walls that would shut him up again with his heavy discontent. What he needed was a break, an interim existence, a means of passing time, other air and a new stock of blood, to make the summer tolerable and productive. (Mann, 1954: 7-8)

The encounter between Aschenbach’s id, ego, and superego can be seen when he meets Tadzio for the first time in the hotel in Venice when he was enamored with the boy’s beauty and likened him to Greek statues:

Aschenbach noticed with astonishment the lad's perfect beauty. His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture-pale, with a sweet reserve, with clustering honey-coloured ringlets, the brow and nose descending in one line, the winning mouth, the expression of pure and godlike serenity. Yet with all this chaste perfection of form it was of such unique personal charm that the observer thought he had never seen, either in nature or art, anything so utterly happy and consummate. (Mann, 1954: 25-26)

On a psychological level, he is depicted as an old man whose logical self is now overwhelmed by a sudden eruption of emotion which had been always oppressed: “But detachment, Phaedrus, and preoccupation with form lead to intoxication and desire, they may lead the noblest among us to frightful emotional excesses, which his own stern cult of the beautiful would make him the first to condemn” (Mann,

1954: 73). Aschenbach finally succumbs to his libido --his id-- and expresses his inner drives. He is then controlled by his sexual desires and his longing for the forbidden love and does not suppress them anymore. His desire principle that makes him pursue his objects of desire despite the obstacles surpassed his morality principle which persuades him to leave the city and forget the boy.

It came at last to this-that his frenzy left him capacity for nothing else but to pursue his flame; to dream of him absent, to lavish, loverlike, endearing terms on his mere shadow. He was alone, he was a foreigner, he was sunk deep in this belated bliss of his-all which enabled him to pass unblushing through experiences well-nigh unbelievable. (Mann, 1954: 56)

During the course of the novella, we find that ego shows itself when there were “not wholly lacking moments when he paused and reflected, when in consternation he asked himself what path was this on which he had set his foot” (Mann, 1954: 56). The combat between his internal desires and external restraints and the ultimate release of his desires and disappearance of his restraints led to his death.

Conclusion

As Travers puts it, it is because of the “unresolved nature of Mann’s fiction, the fact that it posits a world that is perpetually open, both for the characters and, in the process of interpretation, for the reader, that makes Thomas Mann one of the quintessential novelists of the modern period” (1992: 130). His preoccupation with myth is not limited to a continual repetition of past and praise of ancient practices but it is a mixture of the past and the present in an attempt to fulfil the past with the novelty of the present. While many other philosophers and writers of his time wrote about the contemporary civilization, Thomas Mann stays within the traditional narrative form and remains loyal to the subjective narrative of the past which is, according to his viewpoint, the origin of the present. His interest in past and mythological elements does not mean that he is oblivious to the present since his works begin with *Buddenbrook* and end with *Doctor Faustus* which shows his attention to the contemporary social political events and his response to those historical situations. In his essay on Schopenhauer, Mann states that “our most intimate self ... must have at its root a connection with the foundations of the world” (qtd. in Bishop, 2004: 34). Like Schopenhauer, Thomas Mann believes that the epic writer’s goal is to illuminate the internal life by means of external events. Therefore, every aspect of Aschenbach’s inner life and his neutrality can be related to his outward life.

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