

21333-4 ★ IN U.S. \$5.95

• A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLA

Death in Venice and Other Stories by Thomas Mann



Translated and with an Introduction by
David Luke



SIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLAS

Death in Venice and Other Stories by Thomas Mann

Translated
and with an Introduction by
David Luke

BANTAM BOOKS

NEW YORK • TORONTO • LONDON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND

Thomas Mann

Often called the greatest German novelist of the twentieth century, Thomas Mann was born in 1875 in the north German city of Lubeck. He came from a well-to-do merchant family and he was able, even as a young man, to devote himself to writing as a career. He settled in Munich in 1893 and in 1905 married Katja Pringsheim, with whom he had three sons and three daughters.

His first novel, *The Buddenbrooks* (1901), won both popular and critical acclaim. Deeply indebted to the German cultural tradition and specifically influenced by Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche, Mann combines "intellectual" themes with vivid realism and comic flair. Much of his work, including the early novellas, *Tonio Kroger* and *Death in Venice*, explores the psychology of the creative temperament and the often tragic position of the intellectual or artist in bourgeois society. Politically he became an increasingly outspoken opponent of European fascism, a concern reflected in his second major novel, *The Magic Mountain* (1924), and in later works.

Thomas Mann was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929 and the Goethe Prize in 1949. His exile from Hitler's Germany began in 1933, and he was deprived of his German citizenship in 1936. In 1938, he settled in the United States, first as a visiting professor at Princeton and later in California. He returned to Europe in 1952, spending the remaining three years of his life in Switzerland. His most important late work was the monumental tragic novel, *Doctor Faustus* (1947), an allegory both of creativity and of the fate of Germany in the twentieth century. He also greatly extended the comic picaresque fragment, *Confessions of the Confidence Trickster Felix Krull*, which he had begun at the time of *Death in Venice*; it was never finished but appeared as his last novel in 1954. Mann died in Kilchberg, near Zurich, on August 12, 1955.

David Luke is a former Student (Fellow) of Christ Church, Oxford, and a Lecturer in German at Oxford University. His editions and translations include works by Goethe, *Selected Verse*, *Faust Part One*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Roman Elegies and The Diary*, (a book of Goethe's erotic poems), Kleist's *The Marquise of O and Other Stories*, and *Selected Tales of the Brothers Grimm*.

Introduction

The present selection of Thomas Mann's stories represents a period in his work of about twenty years, from his literary beginnings to just before the First World War. This period contains at its end his greatest story, *Death in Venice* (1912, first book edition 1913), and also, near its beginning, his first and (as many would still say) greatest novel, *The Buddenbrooks** (1901). The other stories here selected all belong to the turn of the century, when Mann (born in 1875) was in his twenties; two were published a few years before *The Buddenbrooks*, the rest shortly after it. Mann is generally thought of as a novelist rather than as a writer of short stories (or *Novellen*, as they are usually called in German), and his total output of about thirty stories is quantitatively only a small fraction of his output of major novels. Mann himself, however, was not convinced that the major fictional form was really more suited to his characteristic talent than the short story. Late in his life, when working on *Doctor Faustus* (1947), he wondered, rather overdespondently, whether he would ever be able to write a better novel than his first, which had almost at once established his national fame and twenty-eight years later won him the Nobel prize. He always felt more confident, however, about the value of his short stories, stating more than once that this more succinct form, which he had learned from Maupassant and Chekhov and Turgenev, was his "own genre"; and critical opinion in the thirty-three years since his death has tended to bear this out. His novels fill seven volumes of his collected writings, his stories only one; but in it are several acknowledged masterpieces of European short fiction, and *Death in Venice* in particular bids fair for recognition as the most artistically perfect and subtle of all his works. The short story was a form to which he kept returning between ambitious novel plans, not all of which were realized; and it is significant as well as surprising that all his major novels, from

*The traditional translation of this title, simply *Buddenbrooks*, is not a translation at all: the normal German way of referring to a family is without the article, but it would not be English to say "Smiths" when we mean "the Smiths."

The Buddenbrooks to *Doctor Faustus* (as well as the long picaresque fragment *Felix Krull*, begun in 1910 and finally reaching the end of only its first volume in 1953) were originally conceived as short or "long-short" stories.

Mann was a prolific critic, essayist, and letter writer, and among his many comments on himself and his own work is one, also made in later life, that applies particularly clearly to these prewar stories, though it applies to *The Buddenbrooks* and most of the other novels as well. In his autobiographical essay *A Sketch of My Life*, looking back in 1930 at what was by then the greater part of his literary output, he remarked that each of a writer's works is a kind of exteriorization,

a realization, fragmentary to be sure but self-contained, of our own nature, and by so realizing it we make discoveries about it; it is a laborious way, but our only way of doing so.

And he added: "No wonder these discoveries sometimes surprise us." This has been recognized as an unmistakable echo of Goethe's much-quoted observation (also made in middle life) that all his works were "fragments of a great confession"; and although Mann's is a modern, more complicated, psychologically colored version of the point, it remains an irresistible invitation to us to see his works, like Goethe's, as among many other things a series of exercises in more or less latent autobiography. The fact that so many critics have insisted on this view of them, apparently with authorial blessing and often to the point of tedium, does not mean that we can or should wholly eschew the biographical or psychographical approach, which at one level is a necessary part of the commonplace of general information about both Goethe and Mann. Mann transmuted his personal substance into art with a great deal more self-conscious irony than did Goethe (and irony is another word which, despite its endless reiteration, is impossible to avoid when discussing him); but he was not engaged merely in an introspective or literary game. It was more like a serious process of self-discovery and practical self-analysis, of fictional experimentation with actual or potential selves and actual or potential intellectual attitudes. Despite the cynical mask he often wore, especially in his early years, it was ultimately a quest, a search for some kind of balance and wholeness, for human values that would (by reason

of that very balance) be personally sustaining as well as intellectually satisfying and positively related to the culture of his times. In most, perhaps all, of the stories here presented we can observe, deeply disguised though it may be, this process of self-educative experimentation.

Something like it is certainly happening in *The Buddenbrooks*, which stands as a monumental and dominating feature in the background of the first six of these early stories. At one level it was a vast mirror in which Mann's German public recognized itself, an ironic yet not hostile study of North German middle-class life; but it is far more than a "social" novel. It is autobiographical in the sense that Mann was here exploring his own origins, the roots of his personality and talent as they were to be found in his family and immediate forebears. Artistically the novel is a masterpiece, but as its subtitle, "Decline of a Family," might suggest, the exploration yielded a bleak message. The two characters most closely identifiable with aspects of Mann himself, Thomas Buddenbrook and his son Hanno, who represent the last two Buddenbrook generations, both die (one in his forties, one in adolescence) for no other very good reason than that they have lost their will to live. The positive and humane values embodied in the traditions of this great Hanseatic trading family seem in the end to be negated. Thomas loses faith in them, and his life becomes a mere exhausting keeping up of appearances; the inward-looking, sensitive Hanno never had any faith in them anyway, and solves his existential problem by succumbing to typhus when he is about fourteen. In the closing pages the surviving womenfolk sit round like a naturalistic Greek chorus, trying not to doubt the Christian message of a reunion in the hereafter. Despite the great zest and comic verve with which the detailed substance of the story is presented, *The Buddenbrooks* in the general tendency of its thought may be described (using here another unavoidable word) as an exercise in nihilism.

Thomas Mann himself clung to no kind of Christian faith. His intellectual mentors were Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, particularly the latter, whom he read avidly from an early age; the former he did not encounter at first hand until he was well on the way to completing *The Buddenbrooks*, but from Nietzsche's writings he could have absorbed much of the Schopenhauerian message. Schopenhauer, the supreme exponent and stylist of philosophic pessimism, had published his masterpiece *The World as Will and Idea* as far back as 1818; unrecognized at the time, it had

become increasingly influential in the later nineteenth century. It offered an atheistic but metaphysical system, beautifully elaborated into a symphony of concepts, founded on a deep and imaginative appreciation of the arts (and of music above all, the art Mann most deeply loved), but first and foremost on a rage of compassion for the suffering of the human and animal world. Schopenhauer regarded any kind of "optimistic" philosophy as not merely stupid but actually wicked, an insult to the immeasurable pain of all sentient creatures. In his own later essay on him (1938) Mann remarked on the strangely satisfying rather than depressing character of this great protest of the human spirit: "for when a critical intellect and great writer speaks of the general suffering of the world, he speaks of yours and mine as well, and with a sense almost of triumph we feel ourselves all avenged by his splendid words." The young Thomas Mann, especially, seems to have agreed with Flaubert (and with his own Tonio Kröger) that to write was to avenge oneself on life. Art was redemptive and, so to speak, punitive. That at least was Mann's theoretical and deeply temperamental starting point: a vision, as he was to put it in *Tonio Kröger*, of "comedy and wretchedness." It is part of the essential theme of *The Buddenbrooks* that in proportion as the family loses its nerve its later members become more intellectually sensitized and inward-looking, they participate more deeply in this negative vision. The two processes, culminating in Hanno, are aspects of one and the same "decline."

Nietzsche's influence on Mann was more complex and far-reaching even than that of Schopenhauer. From both of them Mann would learn a high mastery of German prose and, more especially from Nietzsche, a kind of polemical, skeptical, and ironic attitude of mind that was perhaps even more important to him than many of the particular conclusions of Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche, whose own intellectual life had begun under Schopenhauer's spell and who spent much of it trying to turn his master upside down without ever quite succeeding, had been the supreme protester not only against life and against God but against any kind of complacently rationalistic, secular ideology, to which he felt even Christian belief to be preferable. Writing between the early 1870s and his mental breakdown in 1889, he was a thinker of such radical skepticism that his thinking was inevitably fraught with paradoxes. (As a French contemporary had remarked, "*il ne faut croire à rien, pas même à ses doutes.*")

As a young man, at the same age as the Thomas Mann of *The Buddenbrooks*, Nietzsche had adopted the atheistic metaphysics of Schopenhauer's universal life-drive, or "will to live," the "will" that must be negated if life is to be redeemed into nothingness. But a contrary instinct in him seemed, or tried at least, to reject this nihilism. What avenue of escape from it was open?

Nietzsche conspired literary naturalism but was no poet, hard and embarrassingly as he sometimes tried to be. In his youthful, incalculably influential work *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), he had hailed the masterpieces of Aeschylus and Sophocles as the redemptive aesthetic visions of a deeply pessimistic culture and had saluted Richard Wagner as the genius in whose dramatic music the spirit of classical Greek tragedy was now to be reborn. But he turned away both from Wagner (who for Mann was to remain the supreme and representative musical genius) and from metaphysics, and set about exploring the possibilities of a modern, total skepticism, fortified by acute psychological insights of a kind that in some ways anticipated Freud. In the aphoristic writings of what is usually called his second, "positivistic" period, (though the label puts him in company he disliked, and "second period" is also doubtful, since it never really ended) Nietzsche set out to unmask and undermine all the traditional values and preconceptions of European philosophical, ethical, and religious thought. In the first Nietzsche, the devotee of Schopenhauer and Wagner, the young Thomas Mann could embrace a kindred spirit; the "second" Nietzsche taught him that nothing was sacred and everything suspect, that an attitude of guarded self-conscious irony was constantly required and single-mindedness difficult or impossible. The Nietzschean irony was not simply a cautious pose or a literary method: it reflected the contradictions in his thought and temperament, which later became those in Mann's thought and temperament. Nietzsche's persistent polemic against traditional Christian theism as he understood it (its collapse as a respectable option for modern intellectuals was what he called the "death of God") had shrunk from no conclusions or corollaries. The full implications of the disappearance of God must be faced, all consequential losses ruthlessly cut: good and evil, humility and self-denial, charity and mercy and compassion (although, and because, Nietzsche was himself a deeply compassionate man), must be buried with their divine inventor and sponsor. But what of the

puritanical lust for objective scientific truth, for relentless fact, which Nietzsche came to see as a last disguise of God even for atheists, a last secular "absolute" value in which "the Absolute" had taken refuge? Must it not also be discarded, is it not in any case dangerous to know too much, unhygienic to believe too little? What positive vision can be constructed in this emptiness?

The "third" Nietzsche, of *Zarathustra* and the "Eternal Recurrence of the Identical" and the Superman, tried to meet this challenge. The response must be adequately sophisticated, heroic, noble and grandiose, imaginative and creative. The earth from now on must not merely be made comfortable but invested with inherited glory; man must not merely be made happy like a sheep or multitudinous and long-lived like a flea but develop into a "Dionysian" higher being, dancing on the grave of transcendent divinity. Seeking an antidote or at least a palliative for the destructiveness of his own thought, Nietzsche devised an aristocratic humanism centered on the idea of human self-transcendence, a pantheistic monism affirming above all else the divine self-sufficiency and "innocence" of the eternally repeated evolutionary cycle of history. He offered a philosophy that might be called "vitalism," in the sense that its supreme positive value was now Life and Life's enhancement, its supreme negative value biological decadence, and its most far-reaching corollary a critique of intellectual consciousness as such. "Life" itself thus became a quasi-religious absolute value, relativizing the value of Truth. Insofar as the critical and morally conscious intellect stands, as it stood for Schopenhauer, over and against the mindless brutality of the life drive, judging and condemning it on grounds of compassion, that intellect (*Geist*) must itself be held suspect: it is revealed as the chief form of "decadence," the handmaid of nihilism, an anti-vital poison. By making Life (*das Leben*) the central touchstone in relation to which everything—art, morality, science, and even truth—was to be evaluated and rethought, Nietzsche was offering the epoch that followed him its dominant idea and watchword: Life would now be something like what Reason had been to the Enlightenment or Nature to the age of Goethe. But Nietzsche cannot be defined in terms of one idea, only in terms of dialectical conflict. His failure to integrate the Truth-Life polarity meant that his influence too was ambiguous, indeed paradoxical. Mann and others could find in him both skepticism and the desire to escape from skepticism, both nihilism and the struggle to overcome nihilism, both "decadence" as

a reaction against naive complacency and the quest for "the higher health" as a reaction against decadence. These dilemmas, in various forms, show themselves in the early stories by Mann that we are here considering.

Mann's first collection of stories in book form appeared in Berlin in 1898. Samuel Fischer, the head of the great publishing firm then still in its infancy, had an eye for "modern" literature and for Mann's talent, and Fischer-Verlag was now to become the exclusive publisher of Mann's entire work. The firm also owned the important literary periodical *Neue Deutsche Rundschau*, in which most of these stories also first appeared before publication in book form. The first collection took the title of one of the stories, *Little Herr Friedemann*, which the *Rundschau* had brought out in the previous year; Mann had finished it in 1896. He himself regarded it as the first of his important stories, telling a friend that in writing it he had discovered the "discreet forms and masks" under which he could communicate his intimate experiences and problems as published fiction. The story is his first fully developed treatment of the theme of the isolated "outsider," who recurs in variants in many of Mann's works including all of these early stories. In this case, the central character has grown up a hunchback as the result of a childhood accident and has attempted to contract out of "life" by foregoing all sexual attachments; he devotes himself to aesthetic and intellectual pleasures (*Geist*), only to find them all unavailing against the sudden irruption of long frustrated libidinal forces. We can only guess at the autobiographical basis for this tale, written at the age of twenty-one or less. What is obvious however is the parallel with *Death in Venice*: in both cases the central character's carefully structured way of life is suddenly and unexpectedly destroyed by an overwhelming sexual passion. This motif of erotic "visitation" (*Heimsuchung*) seems, as he himself observed, to have been of some importance to Mann, in whose later work it continues to recur (examples are Potiphar's wife in *Joseph in Egypt*, Ines Rodde in *Doctor Faustus*, the heroine in his last story *The Delusion*). The point is one to which we must return in the context of *Death in Venice*.

It would not be misleading to classify *Little Herr Friedemann* as a Naturalist story. A few of Mann's early stories were published in Naturalist periodicals such as *Die Gesellschaft* and *Die Zukunft*, and Naturalism was a school of literature to which he always acknowledged his indebtedness. Its chief German practi-

tioner, Gerhard Hauptmann, also used the theme of sexual infatuation or enslavement in his stories (*Bahnwärter Thiel*, 1892) and plays (*Fuhrmann Henschel*, 1898): it was a telling way of emphasizing man's dependence on his physical nature, in accordance with the doctrinaire deterministic positivism that underlay Naturalist theory. To advance beyond Naturalism, as indeed Hauptmann himself did, was one of the young Thomas Mann's main concerns, and we may trace a "postnaturalist" element in the opening paragraph of *Little Herr Friedemann*, which deliberately parodies the movement's other favorite programmatic theme of alcoholism. The story belongs to a further literary context as well, as an interesting creative variant by Mann of a peripheral situation in Theodor Fontane's recently published and much admired novel of North German life, *Effi Briest* (1895). In Fontane's story the little hunchbacked apothecary, Gieshübler, a modest connoisseur of the arts and a drawing-room musician, is emotionally drawn to the heroine (the beautiful young wife of the new district administrator) but succeeds with tact and good humor in preserving his peaceable existence, based as it is on renunciation. In Mann's more fin-de-siècle version of this, the sad little Herr Friedemann (his name, meaning literally "peace man," is not accidental) is exposed to the disturbing influence of Wagner's music as well as to the attractions of a woman very different from the innocent Effi. There is already a certain Nietzschean coloring in the motif of the physically inferior type fascinated by ruthless physical vitality, though Frau von Rinnlingen is also conceived as an inwardly sick, problematic nature who recognizes in her deformed admirer a companion in suffering but at the last moment (rather like Ibsen's Hedda Gabler) is too proud to admit their affinity and cruelly spurns him.

Little Herr Friedemann, though to a lesser degree than some of the other early stories such as *Tobias Mindernickel* (1898) or *Little Lucy* (1900), may be said to reflect a naturalist predilection for "unpleasant" themes, but in Mann this was far more than a doctrinaire matter. Looking back on his prewar period, he described himself in one essay as

a chronicler and analyst of decadence, a lover of the pathological, a lover of death, an aesthete with a proclivity toward the abyss.

And it was also because he was a born storyteller that the later

Mann, too, never quite lost his taste for the horrible. Another constant feature of his mature narrative writing also first shows itself in *Friedemann*, where in the already mentioned parodistic opening he uses sophisticated detachment and understatement to make the pitiable event of the baby's accident at the hands of the drunken nurse seem tragicomic. It has been said that the novel, by its realism, is essentially a comic form, whatever tragedies it may contain; and Mann's method certainly bears this out. Parallel examples occur in deathbed scenes in *The Buddenbrooks* (the clinical symptomatology of typhoid as Hanno dies) and *The Magic Mountain* (the onlooker's reflections on the chemical composition of his tears) or in the final scene of *Doctor Faustus*, where as the hero makes his shocking public confessions before collapsing into madness, his landlady worries about sandwiches and his audience about how to get back to Munich. The effect in all these cases is of course not to destroy pathos but to heighten it, by inverse countersuggestion and an increased illusion of reality.

The Joker, another of the stories in Mann's first book, was finished in April 1897 and first appeared later that year in the *Rundschau*. The German title, *Der Bajazzo*, means literally "the clown," being formed from the Italian word used in the title of Leoncavallo's opera *I Pagliacci* (1892), which Mann would have known; I have translated it as "the joker" because this word also suggests the oddity in the pack, the outsider. *The Joker* strongly develops this theme and is also the most clearly autobiographical of the stories before *Tonio Kröger*. Mann, of course, used real material from his own life and family background not only in *The Buddenbrooks* but to a greater or lesser extent in most of his important early fiction. Either Lübeck, his native town, or Munich, his city of adoption, is the at least implicit location in nearly all cases; other recurring motifs are the old patrician family house and its garden, and the central character's parents with their contrasting influences on him. *The Joker* combines all these features and others. In real life, Mann's maternal grandfather, a Lübeck citizen who had settled as a planter in Brazil and married a Portuguese Creole, had returned to Lübeck as a widower with his young daughter, Julia da Silva Bruhns; she, at the age of eighteen an exotic Latin beauty with considerable musical talent, had married Thomas's father, Consul (later Senator) Heinrich Mann. As a child Thomas had felt very close to her; she would play Chopin to him (as in *The Joker*) as well as

singing him *Lieder* and reading him fairy tales. As in *The Joker*, too, the young Thomas Mann used to spend long hours producing his own operas on a toy puppet theater. His father had inherited the old-established corn business, but it had done badly during the 1880s and Senator Mann had lost heart. He died in early middle age, when Thomas was sixteen, and the firm went into immediate liquidation (*The Joker*, *Tonio Kröger*). His widow settled in Munich, and Thomas joined her there a little later, in 1893; Munich now became his permanent residence until his emigration in the Nazi period.

The most important autobiographical feature in *The Joker*, however, is its reflection of the young Thomas Mann's state of mind in the years before writing *The Buddenbrooks*, and in this respect it differs interestingly from *Tonio Kröger*, which came after the novel. In both stories the central figure leads a free-floating, unattached existence, as Mann himself was enabled to do by his modest share of the family inheritance, even before his writing began to earn him any income; between 1893 and 1898 his experience of regular employment was limited to six months in an insurance office (a formality scarcely more serious than the Joker's brief apprenticeship to the timber firm) though from November 1898 he worked for nearly two years as reader or junior editor with the satirical weekly *Simplicissimus*. In the late 1890s Mann could not be sure that he was a major creative artist and that he would successfully establish this as his social role: *The Buddenbrooks* had not yet been written. Was he really more than a talented dilettante, lacking the skill and training for any serious occupation?

The Joker, written during his third year in Munich, reflects these uncomfortable doubts, extrapolating them into an experimental alter ego, a figure embodying the possibilities of unattached dilettantism. The narrator in this story (the use of the first person convention is unusual in Mann) is in fact just as much a marked man, a doomed "outsider," as the hunchbacked Friedemann, though in a subtler and less obvious way that takes him some time to discover. He begins by thinking himself one of a socially privileged elite and ends by recognizing that he is a decadent failure—not *vornehm* (noble) but *schlechtweggekommen* (inferior), as Nietzsche would have said—with no real identity or place in society at all. Like Friedemann, he discovers that aesthetic epicureanism cannot in the end compensate for human isolation. The unwitting intervention in his life by Anna Rainer,

superficially resembling that of Gerda von Rinnlingen in Friedemann's, is however not so much an erotic irruption as a critical revelation of his social nullity, reducing him to self-contempt and despair. Only genuine creative talent will redeem the "decadent" outsider and at least to some extent integrate him with society. But Mann, in the next three years, proved his status as the creator of a major and successful masterpiece. With *The Buddenbrooks* written, the more confident "mask" of Tonio Kröger could be adopted.

Mann sent the manuscript of *The Buddenbrooks* to Fischer in July 1900, and a few weeks later wrote *The Road to the Churchyard* as a kind of lighthearted afterthought; it appeared in *Simplicissimus* in September. This short piece parodies not only Naturalism (by reverting for instance to the alcoholism motif) but also Mann's own sub-Nietzschean theme. The boy on the bicycle is referred to merely as "Life": *das Leben* is personified as a commonplace young cyclist brutally pushing aside the melancholic drunkard who tries to regulate his heedless progress. Mann has here deliberately trivialized Nietzsche's notorious vitalistic myth of the "blond beast," the heroic aristocratic embodiment of ruthless energy; a similar sentimentalizing reduction will give us the innocuous blond innocents in *Tonio Kröger*. At the same time the grotesque Lobgott Piepsam represents, in the comic vein, a kind of rudimentary intellectual or religious protest against ignorant, unreflecting vitality. This protest is a recurrent one in Mann and was clearly something close to his own feelings. It also obviously contained an element of envy, plain enough in several stories including *The Road to the Churchyard*, the contemporaneous *Tobias Mindernickel* (a psychological study in which the Piepsam-like outsider kills his small dog in a rage at its animal high spirits), *The Joker* and *Gladius Dei*.

Both this last story and *The Road to the Churchyard* were included in Mann's second collection of six *Novellen*, which Fischer brought out early in 1903; it also contained *Little Lucy*, *The Wardrobe*, *Tonio Kröger*, and *Tristan*, which gave the volume its title. *Gladius Dei* and *Tristan* are linked in a number of ways, as well as both having been written at about the same time (though we know more about the earlier prehistory of *Gladius Dei* from a jotting of 1899 that notes the germ of the story, the motif of a young religious fanatic in an art shop). *Tristan*, possibly also conceived a year or two earlier, was probably finished shortly before Mann's journey to Florence in

the spring of 1901, and *Gladius Dei* shortly after his return. Mann gave a public reading of both stories in November of that year, and *Gladius Dei* was first printed in a Vienna periodical in July 1902, whereas *Tristan* did not appear until the 1903 volume. Mann had visited Florence for reasons connected with both *Gladius Dei* and a longer work with which this story had been associated from the beginning, namely the three-act historical drama *Fiorenza* (1905). *Fiorenza* has no great merit as a play and was never successfully produced; but both it and *Gladius Dei*, a brilliant story which Mann himself underrated, are highly significant expressions of a conflict that Mann took over from Nietzsche and that was also deeply rooted in his own temperament.

The conflict, which may again be abstractly defined as a form of the *Geist-Leben* dilemma, was between his puritanical, morally critical intellect on the one hand, and on the other the experience of visible sensuous beauty, especially as represented in the visual arts and more particularly the art of the Italian Renaissance. The hero in *Gladius Dei* rejects "art" in this sense for the same reason as he rejects "life": namely, that both are expressions of unreflecting sensuous vitality. He claims to represent art of a different kind: something more inward, an intellectual literary art that criticizes life in the name of moral values and religious feeling. These complex relationships and antitheses were to be further explored in a major aesthetic essay under the title *Intellect and Art* (*Geist und Kunst*), for which Mann wrote copious notes in the two years immediately preceding *Death in Venice*, but which not surprisingly he never finished. There seems to have been considerable ambivalence in Mann's attitude to the visual arts. His spokesman in *Gladius Dei* objects to them puritanically as products and elaborations of the sexual drive, and therefore as allied to "life," which is itself a product and elaboration of the sexual drive. (Mann had first learned this from Schopenhauer, who had called the genitals the "focal point of the life-will," and had even suggested that we are ashamed of them because of our unacknowledged moral awareness that life is an intolerable evil that should be ascetically renounced, or aesthetically redeemed, instead of merely reproduced.)

Mann's ambivalence also embraced Munich, where *Gladius Dei* literally takes place, and Italy, where it symbolically takes place. Of Italy, which he repeatedly revisited, he was to say in Tonio Kröger's words:

All that *bellezza* gets on my nerves. And I can't stand all that dreadful southern vivacity, all those people with their black animal eyes. They've no conscience in their eyes.

As for Munich, which became his home and that of so many of his fictional characters, it was after all a metropolis of the arts, more especially of the visual arts, and never was this more the case than in the later nineteenth century and in Thomas Mann's time. There was around 1900 what amounted to a German cult of the Italian Renaissance, with Munich as its center. Since the reign of Ludwig I, the main royal architect of modern Munich, it had been fashionable for Bavarian architects and sculptors and painters to use Italian and especially Florentine models. In the 1840s, for instance, the king had had the Ludwigstrasse built, with the Odeonsplatz at its southern end and on the Odeonsplatz the *Feldherrnhalle*, an imposing military monument deliberately copied from the Loggia dei Lanzi on the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. Mann refers to the *Feldherrnhalle* in the story as "the loggia," and an association, indeed symbolic identification of Munich with Renaissance Florence at the time of the Medici is central to his concept. But his tribute at the opening of *Gladius Dei* to Munich, this "resplendent" latter-day city of art, is of course ironical. The negative side of the ambivalence, the unintegrated puritanical part-self, is projected into the dark figure of the fanatical monkish Hieronymus: and he in his turn is to be symbolically identified with the Dominican prior Girolamo Savonarola (1452-98), the fanatical ascetic reformer who rose in protest against the luxuriant neo-pagan cult of sensuous beauty in Lorenzo de' Medici's Florence, won a popular following and political success for a time but was finally condemned and executed as a heretic. Mann had read Villari's biography of Savonarola, and a reproduction of Fra Bartolommeo's portrait of him, on which the description of Hieronymus is based, stood permanently on his desk. "Hieronymus" and "Girolamo" are of course the same name, and indeed the whole story might be said to be an ironic elaboration of the fact that the name of the Bavarian capital is derived from the Latin word for a monk.

These latent, almost explicit identifications reach their climax at the end of the story, where Hieronymus, ejected humiliatingly from the art shop, conjures up in his mind's eye a vengeful vision of the "burning of the worldly vanities" (the notorious incident that took place on the Piazza della Signoria at Savonarola's