DIE IDEENKONSTELLATION
ALS STRUKTURELEMENT IN DEN ROMANEN

THOMAS MANNS

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Abstract

Thomas Mann's repeated and lifelong insistence on the musical aspect of his writing provokes the question what can be meant by this "musical" quality in his work. With his models, Schopenhauer and Wagner, in mind the suggestion is put forward that an investigation into Mann's method of integrating the various aspects of his work along quasi-musical lines will provide some rewarding insights.

The investigation proceeds from a general consideration of the structural possibilities open to the novelist. The major theories on the structure of the novel are briefly discussed with particular attention to the questions of the effects of series and system, of the formation of thematic spheres, and of the influence of the narrator on such spheres as well as on the aspect of time in the novel. Structure is discussed in the two major divisions of inner and outer structure, and definitions of these are proposed.

Mann's first novel, *Buddenbrooks*, is used to show his treatment of a traditional novel structure and his first extended use of the technique of repetition, quotation and leitmotif, which became the basis of his later structural technique.

Starting from the vista of musical possibilities which opened to Mann after the completion of *Buddenbrooks*, the re-
relationships between the techniques of musical and literary composition are discussed in some detail. The application of musical principles in literature is shown in Mann's novelle Tonio Krüger which is seen as a summary of his new view of literary technique.

The development of this technique is shown in the novel Royal Highness which is investigated as a closely integrated system of themes and discussed from the viewpoint of musical technique.

The fully musical style is shown in Mann's major novel, The Magic Mountain, as a dialectical system of thought integrated through the use of musical principles. The development from a simple transference of musical patterns to literature into a constellation of ideas presented through a quasi-musical technique of composition is discussed in connection with this novel.

With reference to Mann's earlier demand for minimum action in the novel a further step in the development of his technique is shown to have been taken with his four-volume novel Joseph and His Brothers. Here the action is no longer limited in order to permit full treatment of the thematic material. Detailed investigation shows a gain in scope and depth through the integration of the action into the thema-
tic constellation. The action itself with its repetitions and variations of basic roles and situations is now seen as a formal pattern and treated as one of the major themes of the novel.

After a brief discussion of the novel Lotte in Weimar which departs from the "web-of-themes" style, a final metamorphosis of the musical technique is delineated in Mann's novel Doctor Faustus, which treats music itself as one of its themes. These themes form a constellation patterned on the tone-row system of Schoenberg's music. They are connected and integrated in the musical style of that system and are presented dynamically in a shifting perspective which brings different themes into the foreground and shows the whole constellation under varying aspects.

The overall investigation underlines how the various ideas and themes derive their meaning from their position in musically integrated, formally patterned, constellations of ideas.