

Teona Beridze

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Georgia

[teona.beridze@bsu.edu.ge], ORCID ID: 0009-0002-2764-0561

Maia Dumbadze

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Georgia

[maia.dumbadze@bsu.edu.ge], ORCID ID: 0009-0001-0213-7735

Variations of Early Motifs and Parody in Thomas Mann's Novel "The Confessions of the Adventurer Felix Krull"

Abstract: The sense of time, the power of music, the symbolism of colors, mythology and the theme of fairy tales, human faces, the meaning of names, society and modernity, homosexuality, illness and medicine - this is just a short list of the topics that are given attention by researchers interested in Thomas Mann in German, Georgian and generally European or non-European scientific publications. Thomas Mann's early literary works are notable for the development of color symbolism, mythological and fairy tale themes, a gallery of female characters with the characteristics of nymphs, love and intimate scenes and dialogues. This study presents variations of these themes and motifs in Mann's last novel: "Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull" ("Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man: The Early Years"). The article explores the novel to illustrate the parody of early motifs in Mann's later work: as a result of the comparison of artistic forms, intertextual analysis, and discussion of mythological contexts, the paper underscores that Thomas Mann's early motifs are found in his later work with various variations and a pronounced parody. The basis for this assertion is also provided by the comparative analysis of dialogues and specific routine scenes in Mann's earlier novels.

Keywords: Parody; early motifs; later work; Thomas Mann; Felix Krull.

Introduction

The sense of time, the power of music, the symbolism of colors, mythology and fairy tale themes, characters, the meaning of names, society and modernity, homosexuality - this is just a small list of the topics that are given attention by researchers interested in Thomas Mann in German, Georgian and foreign scientific publications. Among other issues, Mann's early work is notable for the development of such themes and motifs as color symbolism, mythological aspects and fairy tale

themes, a gallery of female characters with the characteristics of immortals, love-intimate scenes and dialogues. The article studies variations of the aforementioned motifs in Mann's last novel, "Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man: The Early Years" and illustrates the parody of Mann's early motifs in the novel.

Parody Revisited in Mann's Works

The concept of parody (Greek *parodía*, or counter-song) in literature refers to a distorted or mocking imitation of an already known work, where the form of the original is preserved, however, the content is altered. Parody was used in antiquity in relation to philosophical texts. Later, in medieval literature, especially in romantic lyrics (Minesang), forms of parody are often found. As Hasselblatt notes: "Der komische Effekt entsteht durch einen Spannungsvorgang im Bewußtsein: man weiß, was da parodierend angespielt wird (darum ist Parodie immer ein Bildungsspiel), und man hört, wie dem Angespielten mitgespielt wird" ("The comic effect arises through a tension process in consciousness: one knows what is being played parodied (therefore Parodie is always an educational game), and one hears how the person being played is played")¹ (Hasselblatt, 1963, p. 250).

Alfred Liede emphasizes that any parody is characterized by a conscious play with a literary work "Allen Parodien ist das bewußte Spiel mit einem (möglicherweise auch nur fingierten) literarischen Werk gemeinsam" (Liede, 1958, p. 53). ("All parodies are a conscious play with a (possibly only feigned) literary work together." Liede distinguishes three forms of parody: artistic, critical, and agitational. Artistic parody involves complete imitation, when it becomes impossible to distinguish between the original text and its parody. In the case of critical parody, the main goal is to create a text that is sharply different from the original through polemics and satire.

In separate studies by literary critics, it has been repeatedly pointed out that Mann's last novel, "Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man: The Early Years" represents a parody of a number of themes and motifs. Judging by Liede's classification, Mann's later works can be assessed as examples of artistic and critical parodies.

In these literary texts characters tend to be inclined towards darker colors, for instance, Madame Houplé in "Confessions of Felix Krull,

¹ Here and elsewhere in the article we provide literary translations from German.

Confidence Man: The Early Years” the main character, is often associated with dark colors, even her bedroom “Ein luxuriöses Schlafzimmer, parkettiert, mit großem Perserteppich, Kirschholzmöbeln, blitzendem Gerät auf dem Toilettetisch, einer breiten, mit gestepptem Atlas bedeckten Messing-Bettstatt und einer grausamtenen Chaiselongue” (Mann, 1955, p. 198). (“A luxurious bedroom, parqueted, with a large Persian carpet, cherry wood furniture, a flashing device on the toilet table, a wide brass bed covered with a quilted Atlas and a gray velvet chaise longue”).

Dark colors dominate in the descriptions of the protagonist Felix Krull, when he recalls his nightly visits to Madame Houpflé: “Das Zimmer lag im rötlichen Halbdunkel des seidenbeschrilmten Nachttischlämpchens, von dem es allein erhellt war. Die kühne Bewohnerin erblickte mein rasch die Umstände erforschendes Auge im Bette, unter purpurner Atlas-Steppdecke“ (Mann, 1955, p. 201). (“The room lay in the reddish half-darkness of the silk-shaded bedside lamp, which was lit only by the lamp. The bold inhabitant was seen by my quick, searching eye in bed, under a purple Atlas quilt”).

The decoration and colors of Madame Houpflé’s bedroom are dominant elements of masochistic imagination. Madame Houpflé, a dangerous woman, is an aesthetic figure in this specific atmosphere. The colors and fabrics of her luxurious wardrobe match the furnishing and decoration of the room. With Madame Houpflé, fabrics and their colors are of great importance. They are as diverse and attractive as their owner herself. Madame Houpflé catches Felix Krull’s eyes precisely because of her luxurious and tasteful clothes. The young man did not miss how the well-fitted luxurious clothes are important for this beautiful but vulgar woman. During the daytime, Madame Houpflé wears a „mit Seide gefütterte Pelzwerk“ (“silk-lined fur coat”) (Mann, 1955, p. 198), in the evening she appears “in einem wundervollen weißen Seidenkleid mit kurzer Schleppe“ (Mann, 1955, p. 200). (“in a wonderful white silk dress with a short train”), and at night she is in bed “in einem batistenen Nachtgewande mit kürzen Ärmeln und einem von Spitzen umrahmten quellenden Decollete“ (Mann, 1955, p. 201). (“in a short-sleeved batiste nightgown with short sleeves and a puffy decollete framed by lace”).

Not only the colors of the fabrics indicate Madame Houpflé’s eroticism, but also the dark colors that dominate her bed and the bedroom in general. Here we see a reddish color, and purple colors that prevail in the linen. Madame Houpflé gives preference to darker, shady

red colors. Holger Rudloff (1994, p. 141) points out that red light is commonly associated with a particular environment, where easy virtue reside and dominate their clients. ("Natürlich findet diese man diese Welt der Kulissen und Dekors nicht nur im erzählten Raum der Venus. Das Rotlicht steht umgangssprachlich für ein Milieu. Dirnen halten sich dort auf. Ganz so- oder ähnlich, peitschen sie ihre Freier").

Symbolism of Colors and Sexuality

It is likely that the erotic syndromes of Hans Castorp from "The Magic Mountain" have been transferred to the art game in the "Krull's novel." The conflict-ridden couple of Castorp and Madame Chauchat is now transformed into the Krull- Houplé artistic couple.

The art of transformation allows further expansion: we can trace Krull and Houplé to find Madame Chauchat and Castorp again as well as their habitual traits.

The episode where Houplé confesses her love for the "little stupid slave" (Mann, 1955, p. 203) can easily be associated with the similar episode from the "The Magic Mountain". Houplé utters words that are very similar to Hans Castorp's formulation: "Willst du glauben, Geliebter, dass ich nur dich, immer nur dich geliebt habe, seit ich empfinde? Will sagen, natürlich nicht dich, doch die Idee von dir, den holden Augenblick, den du verkörperst" (Mann, 1955, p. 206).

("Do you believe, beloved, that I have loved only you, always only you, since I have felt you? I mean, of course not you, but the idea of you, the precious moment that you embody").

Castorp's love confession which also consists of alternating French and German, sounded like this: "Je t' aime, lallte er, je t' ai aimee de tout temps, car tu es le Toi de ma vie, mon reve, mon sort, mon envie, mon eternel desir..." (Mann, 2002, p. 476). ("I love you," he cried, "I have always loved you, because you are the "you" of my life, my dream, my fate, my longing, my eternal desire..."). ("Do you want to believe, beloved, that I have only loved you, only you, ever since I began to feel? I mean, not you, of course, but the idea of you, the lovely moment that you embody").

In the episodes of the declaration of love, there is a change of gender. If in "The Magic Mountain" the lover is male, in the novel "Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man: The Early Years" the role of the beloved is played by a woman. The language of the declaration of love also changes. While Hans Castorp from Hamburg swears his love for his lover in French, Houplé from Strasbourg uses German

to do the same. Only the content remains the same. In both cases, the subject is the love of a specific person, the object of his affection. This object of affection is a long-time acquaintance and dream woman. Castorp's "eternal desire" is remarkably consistent with Houpl  's feelings. After all, according to him, he has always loved only Krull.

As we have seen, in the episodes of love explanation, gender changes. If in "The Magic Mountain" the lover is male, in "Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man: The Early Years" the role of the lover is played out by a woman. The language of love confession also changes. While Hans Castorp from Hamburg swears his love for his lover in French, Houpl   from Strasbourg uses German to do the same. Only the content remains the same. In both cases, the subject is the love of a specific person, the object of love. This object of love is a long-time acquaintance and dream woman. Castorp's "eternal desir" (eternal desire) is remarkably consistent with Houpl  's feelings. According to him, he has always loved only Krull.

To support our view that "Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man: The Early Years" ironically imitates the story of desperate love from "The Magic Mountain," we can cite another parallel. Krull's conversation with Professor Kuckuck is a quotation from a conversation between Castorp and Hofrat Behrens. Once again, the narrative unfolds the chemicals that form the basis of love, as well as blood and flesh, cells, particles, and tissues. If Castorp "Feuer und Flamme f  r dies Gespr  ch" ("listened with to this conversation being all "fire and flame") (Mann, 2002, p. 361), Krull is also engaged in Kuckuck's story. Based on the theme of these conversations, he introduces one of the important motifs of the adventurer's parody game, the beautiful arm of a woman, which has an erotic connotation. Krull addresses Professor Kuckuck: „Aber nehmen Sie einen reizenden vollschlanken Frauenarm, wie er uns, wenn wir Gl  ck haben, wohl umschliesst "But take a charming, voluptuous arm of a woman, as it would be for us, if we were lucky (Mann, 1955, p. 311; Mann, 2011, p. 286). ("But take a woman's gracefully curved arms, which, fortunately, would be for us to embrace"). But Krull is not the first to worship this part of the female body and to whom it has an erotic connotation. The sight of Madame Chauchat's white arm also makes Castorp shudder. Even the figures in Mann's earlier works, especially Mr. Friedemann, are powerless in the face of the longing aroused by this part of the female body. They are not endowed with the ability to cope with the mysterious power of a woman's arm. In this case, Krull is the only obedient student. He adopts the wise

Kuckuck advice: “Was aber den vollschlanken Frauenarm angeht, so sollte man bei dieser Gliedmaße sich gegenwärtig halten, dass sie nichts anderes ist als der Krallenflügel des Urvogels und die Brustflosse des Fisches” (Mann, 1955, p. 312). (“As for the slender female arm, one should keep in mind that this limb is nothing more than the clawed wing of a prehistoric bird or the pectoral fin of a fish”). Then he takes into account the professor's words: “Gut, gut, ich werde in Zukunft daran denken. Ich glaube versichern zu können, dass ich es ohne Bitterkeit, ohne Ernüchterung, vielmehr mit Herzlichkeit tun werde” (Mann, 1955, p. 312). (“Well, well, I will think about it in the future. I believe I can assure you that I will do it without bitterness, without sobering up, but rather with cordiality”).

Discussion

The variation and parody of the motifs of the early works is particularly evident in the moment when Houplé asks Krull to steal: „Schleich herum mit Katzentritten im Zimmer und mause! Nicht wahr, du wirst deiner Diane diese Liebe erweisen!” (Mann, 1955, p. 210). (“Sneak around the room with cat steps and mouse! It’s true, you will show your Diane this love!”).

Now a male figure must take on the role of the cat. A playful inversion of the cats – Gerda von Rinnlingen and Clavdia Chauchat – occurs this time in Felix Krull. Unlike these cat-women, Krull’s “cat step” does not convey any danger or threat. Each of these steps is intended only to provide pleasure to the person who orders it, and to ensure that the person who executes it does not go without a reward. All in all, it is a source of pleasure and enjoyment for both parties.

While Krull plays the role of the cat in the love/theft game and Madame Houplé is the happy customer, it is clear that we are dealing with a confusing inversion of the relationship between Castorp and Madame Chauchat from *Walpurgis Night*. Here, the unfortunate Hans Castorp gives in to the customer. The warm cat (Chauchat) has invited him to a love game. The details are not revealed at the narrator's request, which cannot be said of the Houplé-Krull episode. The identity of the structure shown (the parodic borrowing of the contents and formulations from “The Magic Mountain” in Mann’s latest Krull’s novel) leaves us with the right to assume that the events in Houplé’s bedroom ironically imitate the events in Chauchat’s bedroom. However, the adventurer’s confessions openly talk about sexual excesses and the desire to be seduced.

As we have already mentioned above, Felix Krull is Thomas Mann's last novel and is a parody of a number of themes and motifs in the writer's work. We consider it a fact reflecting this parody that Madame Houpfle is also presented in the novel in the role of a mother. The fact that Madame Houpfle also plays the role of a mother and has a special maternal love for Felix is not the only point of view. We can confirm this not only from the text of the novel, but also from existing literary studies.

Madame Houpfle is a female character different from other female figures in Mann. She is a middle-aged woman, forty years old and older not only than the female characters in Mann's early works, but also than her partner Felix Krull. Madame Houpfle seeks erotic adventures. An older woman with great sexual experience, she is a lover of young men: her bed guests must be at most 18 years old. Krull, at twenty, is already almost old for her (Mann, 1955, p. 188). According to Holger Rudloff, "Man hat mit einer Mutterfigur zu tun" (Rudloff, 1994, p. 144). ("We are dealing with a mother figure"). Renner also has a similar opinion: "Spenderin des Schmucks, versorgt den jungen Krull wie eine Mutter" (Renner, 1985, p. 395). ("Houpfle, the provider of jewelry, takes care of young Krull like a mother").

The text of the novel itself provides us with sufficient evidence on this subject. Madame Houpfle often addresses Krull as "boy". She is so delighted by Krull's charm, so bewildered by her son's passionate affection, that she cannot determine her own feelings. After her love affair with Krull, she is so bewildered and overwhelmed that she no longer knows for sure whether she loves Krull as a man or as her own son. Madame Houpfle openly admits this in a conversation with Felix: "Ich will dir sagen... Vielleicht hängt meine Leidenschaft damit zusammen, dass ich nie Mutter war, nie Mutter eines Sohnes. Ich hätte ihn abgöttisch geliebt, wär er nur halbwegs schön gewesen, was freilich unwahrscheinlich, wäre er mir von Houpfle gekommen. Vielleicht, sag ich, ist diese Liebe zu euch versetzte Mutterliebe, die Sehnsucht nach dem Sohn...." (Mann, 1955, p. 206). ("I want to tell you... Perhaps my passion has something to do with the fact that I have never been a mother, never the mother of a son. I would have loved him to bits if he had been halfway handsome, which is unlikely if he had come to me from Houpfle. Perhaps, I say, this love for you is a mother's love that has been transferred, a longing for a son...").

Despite this admission, Madame Houpfle knows that this is stupidity, immoral and devoid of morality. She considers her passion for

young boys to be a fundamental perversion of love. For her, this feeling is a perversion at all, because the boy yearns for his mother, and the woman for her son: "Verkehrtheit, sagst du? Und ihr? Was wollt ihr mit unseren Brüsten, die euch tränkten, unserem Schoß, der euch gebär? Wollt ihr nicht nur zurück zu ihnen, nicht wieder Brustkinder sein? Ist es nicht die Mutter, die ihr unerlaubterweise im Weibe liebt? Verkehrtheit! Die Liebe ist verkehrt durch und durch, sie kann gar nicht anders sein als verkehrt. Setzte die Sonde an bei dir, wo du willst, so findest du sie verkehrt.." (Mann, 1955, pp. 206-207). ("Perversity, you say? And you? What do you want with our breasts that fed you, our wombs that bore you? Don't you just want to go back to them, to be breast children again? Is it not the mother that you love in the woman without permission? Perversity! Love is perverse through and through, it cannot be anything other than perverse. If you put the probe in yourself wherever you want, you will find it perverse...").

These passages from the novel well reflect the eruption of Madame Houplé's passions, her flustered inner world, her pain and her desires. We definitely do not intend to discuss further the "Oedipus complex" in the present article, as far as it is not the topic. However, according to Werner Frizen, "Eindeutig ist, dass Dianes Vieldeutigkeit das Ziel hat, mit Krull einen Inzest zu begehen" (Frizen, 1988, p. 36). (It is clear that Diane with her ambiguous personality intends to commit incest with Krull"). Nonetheless, what shall be noted is that through the literary parody Mann steps into the political one: First, in his 1939 essay "Bruder Hitler," Thomas Mann explores parallels between Hitler and the bourgeois artist, portraying Hitler as a figure embodying a kind of black magic. Second, when Mann revisited Felix Krull's novel in 1950, he intended a deeper political commentary. While Felix, as a Hermes-like figure, represents a positive counterforce to the darkness of Nazism, his actions—reminiscent of the mythological Paris—and his Oedipal fixation on maternal archetypes (Diane Houplé, the Marquis's mother, Frau Kuckuck) align him with a Nazi ideal propagated by thinkers like Bachofen and Baeumler (Nelson, 1971, p. 56-57).

The duality of Madame Houplé's character as Diane Philibert, and her admission in the conversation to her motherhood desires intensifies the connection of Mann's novel with the mythological gods. If she meets her imaginary son in Krull, then during this conception she will beget the son who is both Hermaphrodite and Eros. Nelson (1971, p. 21) points out that the author of the book "Hermes der Seelenführer," Karl Kerényi gave interpretation to the connection between Hermes and

the bisexual god, that explains how Mann's later conception of Felix Krull was influenced by the mythological archetypes, who he masterfully refracted into his own patterns. To quote Nelson (1971, p. 23) "Kerenyi cites a genealogical account given by Cicero which contains conflicting versions concerning the identity of the goddess with whom Hermes consorted to beget Eros. According to one source it was Artemis (Diana), while another mythologem identifies her as Aphrodite".

Diana refers to Krull by the name of Hermes, thus ascribing him divine attributes: the "barren woman" is aroused for the first time in her life by the perfect beauty. As Frizen concludes: "Was sie gebären darf, ist nur die neue Form einer alten Substanz" (Frizen, 1988, p. 46). ("But what she can give birth to is only a new form of an old substance").

Conclusion

As the analysis has shown, the representation of Madame Houplé in the role of a mother and the perception of Felix Krull as a son is a parodic reflection of the treatment of male children of the virgins. Despite the fact that the virgin mothers of their own free will rejected the sons they had born, they are still the loving mothers of their sons in their hearts. Thus, as a result of the contrast of artistic figures, intertextual analysis, and discussion of mythological contexts, it is established that Thomas Mann's early motifs are found in his later work with various variations and a pronounced parody. The basis for this assertion is also provided by the analysis of dialogues and specific everyday scenes in texts from different periods.

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