

Richard Wagner vs Klaus Mann: An Artist-Man Image in the Context of the Faustian Theme in *Mephisto*

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Abstract The article studies the concept of an artist-man as an artistic personality in the philosophical aesthetics introduced by Richard Wagner, based on the idea of the synthesis of the arts, and its transformation in the aesthetics of modernism. The purpose of the research is to analyze the concept of Wagner, provide rationalization for its connection with the Faustian theme and consider its interpretation in the novel *Mephisto* by Klaus Mann. So, the purpose stipulates the usage of methodological basis of the study including cultural and historical, historical and literary, comparative, philosophical and aesthetic research methods. The Wagnerian image of an artistic person and the idea of the synthesis of the arts gain momentum at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and get a second wind in the artistic legacy and theoretical works of the famous Russian symbolist poet Alexander Blok, who developed the concept of Wagner. According to Wagner, the idea of the synthesis of the arts resulted in the idea of creating the image of a free person capable of comprehending, renewing and transforming the world, and thus revealed a connection with the Faustian theme, vital during this period. The essence of an artist-man, establish himself in his creativity, is considered in the article in terms of the development of the Dionysian principle as a primitive creative energy, aimed at creating and transforming the world and man with the help of art. Wagner's concept is realized in an invertible way in the novel by Klaus Mann, where the image of an artist-man is identified with the image of Mephistopheles as the embodiment of a destructive principle. The article analyzes the degrading artistic principle on the basis of the image of protagonist. Mann's interpretation of the Wagner concept and the Faustian theme enables to conclude that the modernist literature of the 1930s is accentuated by the idea of the degeneration of the artistic creative Faustian

principle, its transformation into the demonic principle. So, the idea of transforming the world, implemented in the state reorganization headed by the totalitarian Nazi government, has got the features of the apocalypse.

Key words image of an artist-man; artistry; the Faustian theme; Apollonian and Dionysian; image of Mephistopheles.

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Introduction

The last decade has seen the greater interest in the image of an artist-man as the scholars tend to appeal to the problems of symbolism in literature as well as to such phenomena as artistry, artistic epoch, artistic consciousness and behavior, etc. It is stipulated not only by desire to explore the history of the problem but also by the specific interpretation of the image of an artist-man in the literary works of the 20th century. We can find a number of works covering the problems connected with studying the aesthetic concept of “an artistic man” introduced by Richard Wagner and its impact on symbolism in literature (N. Kravtsov, I. Kondakov, A. Zherebin); the specific features of the image of an artist-man in the works of A. Blok (Ye. Chugunova); the phenomenon of the artistic era and its decline (V. Kantor), etc.

The image of an artist-man, whose “cultural background” originates in Richard Wagner’s works in the early 19th century and gains its momentum in the aesthetics of Russian symbolism at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries (A. Blok, A. Bely), played a significant role in the development of the Faustian theme in the literature of the 20th century, revealing the connection between the Wagnerian concept of “artistic personality” and Faustian aesthetics. The purpose of the research is to analyze the concept of Wagner, provide rationalization for its connection with the Faustian theme and consider its interpretation in the novel *Mephisto* by Klaus Mann. So, the purpose stipulates the usage of methodological basis of the study including cultural and historical, historical and literary, comparative, philosophical and aesthetic research methods.

Wagner’s Image of an Artist-Man: The Artistic Energy as the Energy of Faust

Wagner’s aesthetics had the artist-man raised as the embodiment of the synthesis of the arts which stipulated the idea of unifying the world, its transformation and

renewal. It should be noted that Wagner appealed to the concept of the synthesis of the arts in the 1840s when being self-absorbed and fancied with the “tranquility” of *biedermeier* he deeply felt the problem of unifying and renewing scattered Germany resulted in the burst of the revolutionary moods of 1848-1849. In 1849, the concept of synthesis of the arts and the type of “an artist-man” as the driving force for its embodiment is developed by Wagner in the articles *Art and Revolution* and *Art-Work of the Future*. According to the researchers, the same decade saw the best early Wagner’s work — the symphonic overture *Faust* (1840), which reveals the philosophical pathos of Goethe’s tragedy.

In this regard the idea of synthesis of the arts and Wagner’s appeal to the image of an artist-man were considered, to a certain extent, to be a return to the aesthetics of romantic universalism. The image of an artist-man depicted an artist having gone beyond the limits of empirical reality which is “an aesthetic man” who came instead of “a utilitarian man.” According to Wagner, “Artistic Man can only fully content himself by uniting every branch of Art into the *common* Artwork” (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 75). “An artistic man” is a strong, beautiful person, straining to the free dignity of Man, embodying the world aspirations for the pure humanity. He is the one to whom the world belongs as an eternal, inexhaustible source of the highest delights (Wagner, *Art and Revolution* 54–55). The irresistible attraction of an artist-man to an intuitive comprehension of the secret laws of life allows us to consider it as the embodiment of absolute reality, in the pursuit of which the deep essence of the human spirit is revealed.

The image of an artist-man was presumed to contain Wagner’s intention to ontologize the artistic reality. A. Zherebin says that “Wagner sought to abolish the differentiation between the art and life in the name of the transformation of a man and the world. A synthetic art appears to him as a means of a global synthesis of all phenomena of life, the creation of a certain integral style of culture, in which the “aesthetic sacredness” (Thomas Mann) should become the focus of spiritual self-determination of the people and the individual” (6). While considering the type of an artist-man as the embodiment of the “self-valuable manifestation of the inventive spirit” (Krivtsun 156), Wagner intuitively connected the aesthetics of artistry with the Faustian aesthetics. The idea of synthesis of the arts presupposed the creation of a free perfect man, striving to comprehend and transform the world. Therefore, we believe that the characters of Wagner’s most fundamental operas (*The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, *Wotan*) are regarded by the researchers as the characters of the Faustian type: “They embody the idea of being, the all by nature, but the one realized in an infinite variety of forms, which contains both creative and

destructive principles. Their moral development discloses the ambivalent features of the Faustian reflection as a result of semantic development: from the folk tales to Goethe's interpretation" (Babiy 14). We believe that "Goethe's interpretation" should be completed with "Klinger's one" that depicts Faust tirelessly striving for exploring the mystery of the world which is similar to Wagner's characters as well as to the image of an artist-man: "Pride and untamable impetuosity of mind and in the constant workings of a heated imagination, which was never satisfied with the present <...> He soon felt the narrow limits of humanity, and endeavoured to burst their bonds" (Klinger 26). So, here we have the image of an artist-man as the Faustian spirit harmoniously inherent and the artistry is conceived as a character-forming quality of the Faustian nature, ensuring the integrity of the image of the legendary character.

An artist-man is "a man as a single entity" shown in the concept of Wagner was the image of a person, who "perceived himself as an element of superpersonal being, embodied the synthesis of the ultimate and infinite and realized the idea of a connection with the world entity in creativity" (Zherebin 8). This interpretation enriched and deepened the essence of the Faustian principle. "The synthesis of the ultimate and infinite" suggested overcoming the romantic gap between the ideal and the reality. The artistry coming "not from its dual nature, but from the fullness of the flawed consciousness," according to V. Arslanov (247), provided the "eternal image" with the harmonious wholeness of the spirit and, pushing the boundaries of empirical reality, aroused the desire for an alluring infinity.

The motif of longing for the infinite, peculiar to the Faustian soul, found its realization in the works of Aleksander Blok. The poet believed that it was the greatest essence of the artist-man image which, according to the researchers, was finally completed in the image of Gaetan (*Rose and the Cross*, 1912), but, in our opinion, it was semantically realized in the aesthetic views of Aleksander Blok. The poet considered the artist-man image to disclose a person audient to "a distant call" of the human aspiration for the "desired and unknown," for achieving "the impossible," "a melody that resounds in memory, invoking and summoning up a call" (Blok, *Rose and the Cross: To Staging* 527):

*The world's limitless ecstasy
Is given to the singer's heart.
To the vain road of destiny
The ocean calls him to depart.*

*Surrender to impossible dreams,
For what is fated shall be done...* (Blok, *Rose and the Cross* 59)

According to Blok, an artist-man “yearns for changes waiting for something, starts to explore the ways, tries to tune into the movement, which will soon grab him and lead uncontrollably to the goal set” (Blok, *Rose and the Cross: Note Explaining* 536). This movement disclosed the ability of an artist-man “to live voraciously and act in the new era of whirlwinds and storms, which was fiercely sought by the mankind” (Blok, *The Collapse* 115).

The impulse of the artist-man to reach the infinite, in fact, reveals the Faustian intention to the spiritual transgression which is the desire to go beyond one’s limits and to go outside the world, to abandon the common norms and rules, traditions and prohibitions. The scholars believe that the instrument for the transgression is an artistic act as a fusion of the holy and sacrilegious (Mankovskaya 477), which opens the demonic side of the artistic personality. The demonic principle inherent in the Faustian spirit is a manifestation of creative energy. It is known that when Goethe considered Faust as a demoniac character, he “refused to accept the demonic principle” of Mephistopheles: “No. Mephistopheles is too negative being; The demonic can be seen only in positive energy” (Eckerman 567). The demonic principle, reaching the peak of spiritual tensions in the artistic act, contributes to the intuitive comprehension of the sacramental life, makes it possible to explore the fundamental principle of being, thereby revealing the affinity with the Dionysian element: O. Krivtsun says that “The demonic <...> is an analogue of the Greek mysteries, the personification of the Dionysian connection with the primordial element, with the “initial chaos” <...> Dionisyism, according to the scholar, appears as experiencing the artistic (168). In this respect the Wagnerian image of the artist-man was further developed into the image of the Dionysian artist created by Nietzsche. The Dionysian artistry made the sensual experience of life more tangible, reaching the affectation, when “the sensual is self-valuable and goes beyond all reason” (Krivtsun 164), creating a situation of exceeding the limits and thus developing the ability to oppose “the ego” to the world. When the confrontation prevails, the artistic “turns into a self-sufficient beginning which reigns in all other properties of reality” (Krivtsun 164) and takes on the form of an ardent romantic rebellion as a state of mind peculiar to the Faustian nature. We believe that it was the state, caused by a passionate Faust’s hunger for grabbing the mystery of the universe from God, which allowed making a deal with the devil.

Meanwhile, the absolutization of the Dionysian destroyed the integrity of an

image, which was ensured by the balance of the sensible and rational principles and revealed the very essence of the artist-man. According to Wagner, “the whole artistic man, who proclaims in the arts of Dance and Tone the physical longing become a longing of the soul. His longing for artistic commune gives birth to Thought, the highest and most conditioned faculty of artistic man (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 134, 138).

Wagner harmonized the interaction of the sensible and rational principles (the Apollonian / the Dionysian) in the image of an artist-man in the attempt to create the ideal of a perfect personality capable of transforming and renewing the world. Extrapolating the artistic instinct of transforming a person to changing the world, Wagner develops the idea of creating a new – aesthetic – reality, in effect, implementing the program of the world revolution at the level of art. Thus, according to A. Zherebin, “the socio-political problems in the concept of Wagner are seen through the problems of aesthetics” (6). The artist-man is called for becoming the center of the renewed world and the active energy of the transformative processes. Wagner focuses on the idea of transforming the world as the primary purpose of the artistic personality, thereby, he renders the Faustian aspirations: “An artistic person<...> rules Nature to his own artistic needs and bids her serve his highest purpose (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 158); “An artistic person” is “a wonderful and powerful person to whom the whole world belongs” (Wagner, *Art and Revolution* 54). The idea of a new life creator with the features of the Renaissance God-like man will be later realized in the image of “a superman” by Nietzsche which was considered as a collective individual identified with the people in the same way as an artist-man.

The ideal of a perfect person who is “an artistic man,” “capable (according to Wagner) to feel with perfect clearness its earlier indefinite presage of the Highest, transformed thereby to godlike consciousness” (Wagner, *A Pilgrimage* 42), resembled the image of the demiurge that was noted by the Russian critics and triggered the total rejection of the Symbolists. Thus, S. Durylin in the work *Richard Wagner and Russia* (1913) describes Wagner as “an artist who usurped the divine power. He, the demiurge, is the supreme god of the world of aesthetic reality created by him, for whom the boundaries of art coincide with the boundaries of the universe” (9). In this regard, the transformation, according to Wagner, is not only a necessary condition for a creative life, but also the ability of a person “to rise above his fated dependence on the world will in the act of artistic activity.” Thanks to this capacity, the artist-man “attains the perfection of the universal personality, full of the cosmic life content but not because he accepts the game of the world will, as he

overcomes it” (Zherebin 16).

The moments of close interconnection and mutual interaction between the images of the artist-man and Faust allow us saying that the image of Wagner’s artist-man is based on the rethinking of a well-known cultural archetype. Artistry appears as an inherent quality of the Faustian nature settling the internal conflicts and ensuring the integrity and harmony of the Faustian character, in which creative and destructive, sensual and rational, contemplative and active principles are balanced. Separation of the artistic, its transformation from a free art play “without any desire to manipulate someone’s consciousness” (Arslanov 249) into histrionics leads to the disintegration of the Faustian image, in which the spiritual component disappears, being substituted for pure pragmatics.

The close interconnection of the artistic and Faustian principles, which marked a kind of intersection of the cultural destinies of two images, reaches the peak of its aesthetic and ontological manifestation in the first half of the twentieth century, when the “artist-man” and Faust, in fact, become the symbols of the era, and the Faustian myth—“a precedent text” (N. Pakhsaryan 136). S. Klemchak points out the affinity of the artistic and Faustian principles, claiming that the 20th century saw “the image of Faust” drifting “towards the artist-man <…>”, uniting the images of the poet and conqueror into a single one” (163). It is also symbolic that the scholars offered to interpret this period as an “era of artistry,” as its prosperity at the beginning of the century and the decline in the 1920s-1930s coincides chronologically and conceptually with the period of the last outbreak and decline of the Faustian culture. Thus, not only the crossing points are revealed but also the general tendencies of the development of Faustianism and artistry are seen (including the prerequisites for explosion and decline), when the impulse of transforming the world and the aspiration for transforming a man, converging, intersect in a single point.

Considering the first twenty years of the 20th century as a period of incredible spiritual rise, the flowering art and science, described by N. Berdyaev as a “cultural renaissance,” V. Kantor focuses on the active creative energy in art and science in Russia and in Western Europe, which led to the incredible discoveries in the life of mankind (126). It was a period when the artistry was felt as a divine creative energy aimed at reaching harmony with the world. R. Bazhanova notes that “the artistry appeared as an artistic and aesthetic way of man’s taking up a multiple position in the Being which provided the great and complete Presence in the world as a unique way not only “to dissipate” in the flow of the Being, taking its forms (Proteus beginning of a man), but also as a unique opportunity to contrast one’s

human (corporeal, first of all) essence with the changing time and space of the universe. Meanwhile, it is as the possibility which activates the Dionysian principle and allows getting one's own changing and multiple human essence in the disguise of the Other (Bazhanova 11). In this regard the phenomenon of artistry solved the problem of individual freedom, later transformed into the idea of liberating the mankind, which marked "the inevitability of a huge number of people reaching the forefront of the history and the artistry turning into a mass phenomenon. According to the scholars, it preconditioned its decline in the following decades (it should be noted that at the same time there is a transformation of Faustianism into mass ideology, to a large extent caused by the transition of the Faustian principle into the form of collective individuality).

The 1920–1930s marked the period when the Faustian spiritual energy turned into pragmatism and artistry as a creative potential into histrionics, a gallery play. This tendency was once predicted by Nietzsche: "the most interesting and maddest ages always emerge, in which 'the actors', all types of actors, are the real masters" (216). These "maddest ages" brought about a phenomenon when the great actors, so called "the transformers of the world" described by V. Kantor as "self-appointed," "the people behind pseudonyms" appeared on the historical stage. Among them we can find Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Hitler as well as Mussolini, Franco and etc¹. In this situation, the very essence of a play as a productive form of cultural development was undermined.

The play, the most significant feature of which, according to Johan Huizinga, is its temporary completeness ("Play begins, and then at a certain moment it is "over"), "now <...> never ends, and therefore it is not a true play" (Huizinga, *In the Shadow* 332). Artistry transformed into a gallery play turns into "a false seeming, a masking of political purposes behind the illusion of genuine play-forms" (Huizinga, *Homo ludens* 211).

Transformation of the Artistic Principle in the Novel by Klaus Mann

The nature of the pestilent metamorphoses of artistry was revealed along with the Faustian theme in *Mephisto. Novel of a Career* (*Mephisto, Roman einer Karriere*, 1936) by Klaus Mann, where social and political processes are considered through the prism of deteriorating cultural and aesthetic phenomena, artistry and

¹ It is noteworthy that these people felt that they are the actors. In one of the last interviews, Mussolini said: "Yes, madam, I am finished. My star has fallen. I work and I try, yet know that all is but a farce <...> I await the end of the tragedy and—strangely detached from everything—I do not feel any more an actor. I feel I am the last of spectators" (Nelson).

Faustianism. Stressing the relevance of his artistic research Klaus Mann wrote: “Was it worth writing a novel about such a prominent figure? Yes. A play actor became an embodiment, a symbol of the regime which is histrionic to the core, deeply mendacious and unviable” (Mann, *The Turning Point* 134).

Two ways of artistry realization — the genuine and the imaginary— are mentioned in the epigraph of the novel taken from Wilhelm Meister’s *Apprenticeship* by Goethe: “All weaknesses of a man could be forgotten for an actor, but none of an actor could be forgotten for a man” (Mann, *Mephisto* 3). The theme of acting determines the type of the artistic space of the novel as a scenic space embodied in the image of a theater city where a historical play is on the stage. The thin line between the genuine and the imaginary, traditional for the theatrical stage, going back to the aesthetics of the prehistoric theater (Freidenberg), according to the author’s intention, becomes visible so the artistic space of the novel is divided into two spheres represented in the image of two theater cities—Hamburg and Berlin—each is the embodiment of the genuine (Hamburg) and the imaginary (Berlin) artistry principles.

The image of the theater is a meaning-making dominant of the urban space in the novel. The Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg and the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, embodied the holistic images of two cities, are seen in the novel as a reflection of the historical and cultural processes and the social and political life of Germany, with the Wagnerian idea of the theater as a universal semantic space where the artistic humanity is formed and developed. As A. Zherebin notes this space allows “a theater using the functions of all public institutions, taking the place of the parliament and the court, the science and production” (12).

The difference between the genuine and imaginary artistry is not only connected with the space (different cities), but also with the time, symbolically pointing to the change of the historical epochs, namely, before and after the Nazis coming to power as the history of Hendrik Höfgen’s career begins in Hamburg in the 1920s and is transferred to Berlin in the 1930s.

The image of the Deutsches Schauspielhaus of the 1920s in Hamburg introduced Wagner’s idea of creating a single artistic humanity based on the aesthetic activity prevailing over the utilitarian one. Klaus Mann emphasizes the preservation of the classical repertoire in the theater, despite the fact that it is not reasonable in economic terms as it significantly reduces the revenue. The idea of forming the aesthetic humanity is compliant with the artistic ideology of the theater, being the main principle of Oscar H. Kroge, a director.

The image of Kroge whose external appearance coincided with the internal

content: “A speaking face, high wrinkled forehead, once thick white hair thinning out and his kind eyes, full of wisdom, hidden behind the wire-rimmed glasses set in gold” (Mann, *Mephisto* 38), complied with Wagner’s vision of an artist-man: “Through the expression of the eye itself, which directly meets the eye of the beholder, man is able to impart to the latter not only the feelings of the heart, but even the characteristic activity of the brain; and the more distinctly can the outer man express the inner, the higher does he show his rank as an artistic being” (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 91).

The theater unites under one roof the representatives of all social layers in the city and the advocates of various, sometimes opposing, political views. They are the communists (Otto Ulrichs) and “the sympathizing” (Kroge, Hedda von Herzfeld), the national socialists (Hans Miklas, Knurr) and others. Theater was the place where very diverse people, being in love with the art, turned into “the humanity” as all disagreements vanished, jealousy and resentment, atrocity and tyranny of the director Höfgen are more than outweighed by the successful premiere.

In “the theatrical” vision, the city was represented as an artistic space, *created*, as Höfgen was obsessed with the idea of conquering, of mesmerizing the Hamburg audience, of being ingratiating at any price and thereby gaining the power over Hamburg, so it was in Hamburg where Höfgen was formed as an artist-man.

The “Hamburg” period of Höfgen’s creative work is marked by the desire of the character to reach the heights of acting. His talent is tremendous, multifaceted and developed by the urge of the artist-man “to expand the individual man, to whom he would address himself, to the associate manhood of full publicity <...>, broadens out his own particular being, by the portrayal of an individual personality not his own, to a universally human being” (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 193). The novel *Mephisto* present this universally human being principle in the image of Hamlet as a role accessing the skills of an actor, testing the authenticity of artistry as well as the ability to achieve a high ideal¹*. The author’s approval of Höfgen having coped with Hamlet is, therefore, the most valuable criteria for the artistic genius.

Klaus Mann often focuses on the brilliant play of Höfgen, his omnipresence, his sophisticated talent of transformation, especially in the first chapters of the novel. The way how Höfgen plays on the stage allows us supposing that Mann’s

1 It is interesting that Wagner saw the high level of artistic skills in the role of Faust, not of Hamlet: “Should it ever come to a general master of our actors and a sifting-out of the unfit, I would give to each the role he might select from *Faust*, and make his retention at the Theatre depend on how he took it. This would be the test of the actors’ originality, the converse of that proposed above for the originality of the pieces” (Wagner, *Actors* 183).

image of an artist is really close to Wagner's artistic person, as Höfgen during "Hamburg" period is undoubtedly able to become "the subject and the matter of his own artistic treatment" (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 156), was perceived as the divine image of an artist on the stage:

He could be elegant as well as tragic. His smile was bitchy, but a wrinkle over the bridge of nose was full of anguish. He could charm with his perky wit, he could strike with a powerfully raised chin, with a speech full of imperatives and a nervous gesture full of pride. He could touch with a humble helplessly wandering gaze, with a tender confusion seemed to belong to the other world. He was noble and mean, arrogant and tender, harsh and depressed—the one demanded by the repertoire <...> His brilliant, knowing no limits, defiant reincarnation is simply brilliant! (Mann, *Mephisto* 106–107, 277)

This period brought about the brilliant talent of Höfgen multiplied by titanic diligence and ambition. He works sixteen hours a day, obsessed with a desire of keeping on self-development, self-transfiguration and with the idea of having absolute power over the crowd. These qualities could remind Faustian longing for the infinite, the urge for endless search, a boast about being solitary and at the same time the reminiscence of the eternal motive for power over the world: "He felt like a winner when he had the opportunity to break away from the public, to step into a bright light and shine. He felt really safe only being above, face-to-face with the crowd existing only to bow to him, to admire him, to applaud him" (Mann, *Mephisto* 180). Being worshipped by the crowd for Höfgen meant transforming the public by means of his powerful artistic rebirth. Wagner noted that "this powerful, nay, this despotic effect can necessarily be never equaled by any other art," thus "the highest grade of the effect of the sublime was here attained" (Wagner, *Actors* 161).

Achieving the effect of artistic transformation and impact on the public was not possible only provided with the acting mastery and the laws of the theater followed, in other words, applying only "Apollonian principle." It was necessary to have a natural, inborn artistic principle being the source of creative energy set in the image of a spontaneous, instinctive, sensual Dionysian soul. Höfgen found the source of instinctive creative energy, fueled by his talent, in Juliette, a mistress and a dance teacher.

The image of dark skinned Juliette Martens in her novel is the personification of a primitive natural principle, felt even in her stage name, Princess Tebab, perceived by Juliet herself as her real name, as well as in the name "Black Venus"

given to her by Höfgen. Primitiveness is also laid down in the basis of her artistic essence as Juliette is a step dancer and a step teacher, the art genetically coming from the ancient tradition of the African rhythmic ritual dance. Klaus Mann focuses on Juliette's appearance pointing to the savage, often animal essence: "strong, fierce cheekbones," "barbarous head," "agile, violent and intelligent eyes," "flat nose" (Mann, *Mephisto* 89-90), "muscles of chocolate legs" (Mann, *Mephisto* 93), "open ferocious mouth with dark, cracked lips and bloody tongue" (Mann, *Mephisto* 104). She speaks, "turning the eyes wildly," "a gruff, barking voice" (Mann, *Mephisto* 205), so he creates a portrait of the character as a visual image of the Dionysian principle, the original artistic energy:

Her face resembled the terrible mask of an unknown god - this god reigns in a dense forest, in a secluded place; as if grinning and gazing he demands the humans to sacrifice. And he is given those sacrifices, with blood flowing at his feet, he sniffs a familiar sweet smell, slightly swinging his regal body in the rhythm of a mad tam-tam. And he is surrounded by his loyal performing an enthusiastic dance. Scattering their arms and legs, jumping, swaying, staggering. Their roar turns into a voluptuous moan, and now they are suffocating, and now they are falling, falling down at the feet of a black deity, they love, they admire, because they can love and admire only those whom they sacrificed the most expensive which is their blood. (Mann, *Mephisto* 97-98)

M. Voloshin considered a dance as body liberation and noted "what can be more beautiful than a human face, reflecting faithfully and harmoniously those waves of moods and feelings rising from the depths of a soul? Our body should have become our face <...> the body should have reflected the spirit. A dance is the same sacred ecstasy of the body as a prayer being the ecstasy of a soul <...> Out of words and out of any tools a man become an instrument in a dance, a song and a creator, and his whole body sounds like a timbre of voice." According to Voloshin, dance is "an expurgatory mystery" where "the rhythm rises from the very depth of the unconscious human essence." The cosmic and physiological merge in a dance, feelings and logics, reason and cognition come together (394). It was in the ecstasy of dance, when the image of the artist-man appeared considered as such in Wagnerian interpretation. Juliette's dance lessons awakened the natural cosmic principle in Höfgen's soul, being a source of genuinely artistic spirit, it spiritualized the talent, filled the mastery of Höfgen's play with a higher meaning

and, ultimately, made the public's heart miss a beat. That is why Höfgen was completely sincere when he repeated to his Black Venus that he owed his success entirely to her. Communication of Juliette and Höfgen resulted in the highest degree of tension, affect, irrational demonic impulse, which, according to O. Krivtsun, can produce something extremely significant, which can make you face with the primary music of being, with the inmost fire of creativity (168).

Under the circumstances the image of Juliette took on a symbolic meaning in the novel. In fact, she lost the status of an independent character turning into an organic component of the image of Höfgen, thus, she was the aesthetic dominant of the image of the artist Höfgen, *the shadow of the Dionysian artist* inseparable from him allowing the character taking stock of him, as only with Juliette, "together with her, only with her, he forced himself to be sincere. He did not hide anything from her, even his own shame" (Mann, *Mephisto* 206). But what is the most important is that this "Dionysian shadow" fueled the divine fire of creativity in the artist's soul. In this regard we should note that the comparison with Dionysus emphasized by Klaus Mann while describing Höfgen's scenic performances can be met in each chapter covering "the Hamburg period" of the character's life:

He nodded imperatively to the conductor, and when he waved his wand again, he began to dance. No, it was a bald gentleman in a gray, a bit shabby everyday suit any longer! What a shameless, exciting transformation! In a broad daylight! Isn't he Dionysus, the god of wine, throwing out his hands and feet in ecstasy?.. Voluptuous moans flew out of parted lips. <...> Hendrik gave a sign to the music to stop, he was already standing in a careless posture, put a monocle into his eye. So, no one would believe that this gentleman, looking at a piece of paper with a critical eye, shaked in the Dionysian trance two minutes ago. (Mann, *Mephisto* 233–234)

Höfgen's multifaceted talent was realized not only on the stage. Let's consider the fact that the face of an actor-man is seen through the divine face of the artist at the end of this scene because the artist Höfgen was as such not only on the stage, but also in life. Acting as a behavior style, being an integral quality of the protagonist, indicates the unity of the aesthetic and ontological spheres of being in Höfgen's consciousness. F. Stepun in his work *The Nature of the Actor's Soul* noted that "the most peculiar feature of genuine artistry is an irresistible longing for both reality and dream as two equivalent hemispheres of life" (58). In this regard the behavior of Höfgen was not the result of being aimed at benefiting, but an artistic world

perception as such, the impossibility of being different. Paradoxically, it was the quality that made Höfgen attractive to the others because it communicated the complexity and mysteriousness of his character, laying in the impossibility to be determined, “*Where does this person have the hypocrisy begin and where does it end?*” (Mann, *Mephisto* 240). Sebastian caught the artistic essence of Höfgen quite accurately: “It seems to me that I understand him. He always lies, and he never lies. His falsity is his authenticity, it sounds difficult, but it is absolutely simple. He believes in everything, and he does not believe in anything. He is an artist” (Mann, *Mephisto* 240). In this case the constantly changing masks in the life of the protagonist often told about the desire to run away from the problem, about the unwillingness to resolve a difficult life situation rather than about the perverse disposition.

It is important to note that the author’s stance to the idea of Höfgen being prone to permanent reincarnations in the novel is extremely negative. Klaus Mann sees the falsity in the transformations of the character, with no longer a human face but the mask of a comedian, which is realized by means of adding an ironic or grotesque detail to the portrait casting doubt about the authenticity of Höfgen as an artist. Thus, the portrait of the character often has two perspectives; the first one demonstrates the one, who Höfgen wants to appear, the second – who he is in fact, according to the author:

These gray and green chatoyant eyes reminded the precious stones inflicting misery... All ladies and mostly all men found Hendrik Höfgen <...> pretty handsome. His deportment was restrained, as he realized his irresistibility, his movements were greatly planned and his tail coat was expensive. It was a way to distract attention from the fact that he was obviously fat, with fatty hips. (Mann, *Mephisto* 26)

Höfgen’s hands <...> with their clumsiness refuted the anguishing temples. The back of the palms was too wide with red hair. The fat fingers were rather long and the nails were square and not so clean. It was these nails that gave the hands something ignoble, almost repulsive. (Mann, *Mephisto* 75)

The key details of the portrait, frequently emphasized in the course of narration, play a major role in the author’s interpretation of the image of Höfgen, increasing the gap between the poles of the binary opposition “to be / to seem.” So, “*fatty hips*” and “*not so clean nails*” destroy the seemingly demonic image of the character;

“anguishing temples” and “protruded chin” lose their greatness next to “chatoyant eyes,” which looked like “precious stones.” Comparing the character’s eyes with precious stones is of special importance, in fact, they become an artistic detail which could be met throughout the novel. A vivid metaphor describing the portrait of Höfgen is appealing “the eyes are rare precious stones inflicting misery <...> frightened” in combination with the evaluating epithet “pretty handsome.” The key words “Beauty (handsome),” “Precious,” “Fright” at the beginning of the novel contain a subtle allusion to Charles Baudelaire’s *Hymn to Beauty*, thus, weaving the motif of *The Flowers of Evil* into the narrative, which later will be felt at full strength, becoming, to some extent, the meaningful one in the relations between Höfgen and Juliette:

Do you come from Heaven or rise from the abyss, Beauty?
 You walk upon corpses which you mock, O Beauty!
 Of your jewels Horror is not the least charming... (Baudelaire 74)

The well-known words of Baudelaire, which interpret the dual essence of beauty, in fact, tending to stipulate its diabolic nature^{1*}, draw attention to the moment of close interrelation and reciprocity of the Divine and Diabolical principles as the next transformation of the artistic spirit. At the beginning of the novel Höfgen recites the French poet to Juliette, however, the portrait of the protagonist mentioned in the prologue proves the kinship of Höfgen and the Baudelaire demonic anti-ideal of beauty, for example, “eyes like precious stones,” “frightened” and ability to “wade through slaughter” repeatedly stressed by the author as the inevitably interconnected qualities of Höfgen’s nature, in which the external beauty manifests the inner mental ugliness.

It is necessary to emphasize that out of all the properties of precious stones (shine, radiance, transparency, etc.), the author emphasizes only iridescence and shimmering, in other words those qualities, meaning and figurativeness of which are really close to *the image of the game*. Thus, “the mirror of the soul” of the protagonist reflects his deep essence embodying the constant transformations, transfiguration, masks changing, i.e. the game that places artistry on the verge of histrionics, comedy, when the artistic ecstasy of transformation as Wagner’s “a sacrifice of his personality” boils down to a change in facial expression, which

¹ The scholars state that *Hymn to Beauty* is one of the brightest examples of Baudelaire’s diabolism being the attempt to state that the Devil is the progenitor of all kinds of beauty, especially female (Vitkovsky 305).

is expressed in rather vivid, emphasizing falsity, ironic strokes to the portrait of Höfgen in the novel: “A timid theatre staff faced a face of a noble, sophisticated tyrant, however, slightly resembling to the face of an aging and irritated governess” (Mann, *Mephisto* 81) etc.

It should be noted that one of the greatest examples of the author’s modality in the novel is shown not only in the image of Hendrik Höfgen. The biased stance of the writer can be found in relation towards the rest of the characters in the novel, whose portraits clearly reflect the socio-political and ethical priorities of Klaus Mann. Such visible examples of the author’s likes and dislikes, at times turning into the excessively hard-line author’s stance towards Mephisto’s characters, is likely to be stipulated by the nature of the novel as a genre, making a text be of a journalistic style at some point, a text with recognizable prototypes. The prototypes in the novel are not just Klaus Mann’s contemporaries. On the one hand, these were the Nazi politicians the writer rejected and felt disgust to, and, on the other hand, his friends and relatives, famous theatrical figures being his close acquaintances and those sinking deep into his mind¹. All of them could be found on the pages of the novel and the artistic images still preserve the joy and pain experienced. In this regard the portrait characteristics reflect not even subjective but rather intimate personal view of the writer, the image of Hendrik Höfgen could fit into.

On the other hand, evidence of the unique author’s stance in the details of Höfgen’s portrait can be considered as foreshadowing the future transformations of the artist. In this respect many portrait features of the character reflect the transformation of artistic imagery which is realized in the actualization of the

1 Thus, the image of Hendrik Höfgen was created on the basis of a well-known actor Gustaf Gründgens who served as a commissary in the Deutsches Theater and the Prussian state adviser under the Nazi regime. The image of Oscar Kroge has clear signs of a portrait resemblance to Erich Ziegel who was a famous director, head of the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in the 1920s. Max Reinhardt, the legendary director of *Faust*, who was called “the father” of the German stage production in the 20th century, was perpetuated in the image of the Professor. The image of the court poet and playwright Cäsar von Muck is compliant with Hanns Johst, a notorious expressionist writer, who went to serve the Nazis. Carl Sternheim, a well-known satirist dramatist of the early 20th century, became the prototype of Theophil Marder; it is possible to trace the features of the actress Pamela Wedekind, engaged with young Klaus Mann, in the image of his beloved Nicoletta von Niebuhr. The image of Barbara resembles Erika, Klaus Mann’s sister, the image of her father, the secret counselor of Bruckner, has an apparent similarity with Thomas Mann. Klaus Mann found his place in the portrait gallery in the image of Sebastian, a friend of Barbara. It is so obvious that the image of the fat the prime minister, the patron of Höfgen, reflects Hermann Göring, the image of the Propaganda Minister – Joseph Goebbels, and so on.

famous Christian cultural mythologem “Holy Face—Face—Disguise” in its sacred sense of “the divine—the human—the diabolical.”

The “tarnishing” Holy face of the artist and the transformation of a face into the disguise are revealed in the novel as a new stage in Hendrik Höfgen’s work, connected with his move to Berlin. The capital, being conquered by Höfgen, was his ultimate dream, it became a real challenge for him testing his strength, the ability to preserve and develop the divine and human principles of artistic nature. The howling success, predominating and power (over the city), fear, betrayal and, ultimately, the shipwreck of hopes were the milestones of “the Berlin period” in the protagonist’s life, marking the decline of the artist-man.

The beginning of the career in Berlin, which was so successful for Höfgen and so significant for the development of the artistic image, was characterized by the fruitful cooperation of Höfgen with the Professor, the head of the Deutsches Theater. The crowning achievement of this collaboration and, intrinsically, of the artistic career as a whole, was the role of Mephistopheles in *Faust*, which was staged by the Professor on the occasion of centenary of Goethe’s death in 1932-33. Communication with the great direction master has impressive results as Mephisto becomes a triumphant role of Höfgen, and, at first glance, it seems that he reaches the heights of his artistic mastery, however, this performance can reveal the key transformations of the artist-man, following below:

Mephistopheles, the “strange son of chaos,” is the great role of the artist Höfgen, he did not put so much fervor into any other role. Mephistopheles should be his own masterpiece. His mask itself is a sensation as Höfgen makes out of the prince of darkness a scamp, the scamp the king of heaven sees this embodiment of evil in his infinite goodness, at times even honoring him with his society because of “all the spirits of denial he is the one I best can tolerate...” He plays him as a tragic clown, diabolical Pierrot. A perfect bald head is powdered white as well as the face; his eyebrows extended upwards grotesquely, his blood-red mouth stiffened in a smile. The gap between the eyes and artificially raised eyebrows is painted in multiple colors <...> Exciting landscape of colors over seductive precious stones are the eyes of Satan! (Mann, *Mephisto* 287)

The image of Mephisto performed by Höfgen becomes the main element “tuning” the Faustian theme into the novel, the theme that was mostly revealed with the maximum depth and brightness of expression in connection with the image of

Berlin and “the Berlin period” of the character’s life.

It should be noted that the development of the Faustian theme in the novel is primarily aimed at strengthening the Mephistophelian principle and weakening the Faustian one that could be proved, above all, by means of direct allusions to Goethe’s tragedy. G. Ishimbayeva notes that the first chapter of *Mephisto* (“Prologue, 1936”) refers to two prologues of *Faust* by Goethe, i.e. the scene of Klaus Mann’s novel is laid in the theater as well as among the celestials (11). However, unlike the tragedy of Goethe, where the main characters in Prologue are “The Lord and the heavenly host,” Klaus Mann’s scene depicts the celebration of Prime Minister’s birthday, where a splendid reception at the Deutsches Theater turns into a ball of Satan.

Thus, at the very beginning of the novel there is a strong connection established between the Nazi regime and the infernal forces of evil, in which the images of the powerful “Nazis” are the personifications of the Devil’s retinue. It should be noted that the contemporary studies tend to interpret the fascism figuratively as “a brown Faust” and in this respect we can assume that Klaus Mann claimed the motif of the fusion of Faust with the devil in the beginning of the novel. In this case the interpretation of the destructive nature of the Faustian principle comes to the forefront, so the author projects it to the image of the artist-man, thereby, defining the way of developing the image of the protagonist.

The atmosphere of the wedding of Höfgen and Nicoletta von Niebuhr is getting ominous and demonic. It is designated in the novel as “the wedding of Oberon and Titania,” where the traditional mythological images of the king and the queen of elves are transformed into the images of the rulers of Hell.

Finally, the demonic principle is strengthened in the chapter “A Pact with the Devil,” where the traditional scene of Faust making a pact with Mephistopheles acquires a different semantic load. The deal, where the soul of Faust is bargained, is not the matter, what is important is the transformation of Faust into Mephistopheles when the Faustian principle turns into the demonic one. G. Ishimbayeva emphasizes that the character of Klaus Mann’s novel is “a true German, with “the Faustian soul” and “a piece of Mephistopheles,” being under the dominant influence of the Faustian principle as well as of the Mephistophelian one, given the circumstances. In this case the mythologem of Faust bargaining with the Devil is twofold in the novel, because Höfgen has two opposite principles and, hence, each side acts as the seducer, then as the seduced (Ishimbayeva 9). At the same time the author keeps on emphasizing the internal affinity of Hofgen with the evil forces: “*Hendrik had an innate sense for the base motives of the underworld*” (Mann, *Mephisto* 300). In

this case the deal with the Nazis, Höfgen is making when he accepts Göring's proposal to take the post of a managing director of state theaters, is a quite logical step for the protagonist. And, like the treaty with Mephistopheles for Faust meant his imminent death, the deal with the Nazis for Höfgen marked his death as an artist-man. The subject of the contract in the traditional plot and in its modern interpretation is equivalent, therefore, in the first case it is the soul of the scientist, in the second one—the soul of the artist. Punishment is also quite equal: the understanding of the artistic gift loss becomes the infernal torments of the character, the logical outcome of transforming the soul of the artist into the soul of the hypocrite as well as the transformation of the Divine principle into the Diabolical one.

This diabolical light throw an ominous shadow and everything becomes distorted, space is going deformed, so the city turns into a theatrical scene where an absurd historical performance is played, showing “the corruption of people,” the destruction of personalities, “a slight and almost parodical shift of social roles” (Kantor 154):

Very nice killers, and everyone now has the highest positions in the Gestapo. The teacher, recently released from an insane asylum, is now the Minister of Culture. The lawyers calling a law the liberal prejudice. The doctors considering the treatment to be the Jewish quackery. The philosophers declaring a race to be the only objectively true <...>¹ and the foreigners cannot take their eyes off the impressive, creepy performance. (Mann, *Mephisto* 353, 479)

This constant “sprinkling truth and deception,” peculiar to the Berlin scene, reminds the features of the folk theater, where, according to O. Freidenberg, the borders

¹ The given quotation can be regarded as an allusion to the novel about Faust by Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger where a series of allegories is used in the description of the Infernal Banquet: “Then appeared Medicine and Quackery, and were received with loud laughter: they danced a minuet, to which Death clinked the music with a purse of gold... These were followed by Jurisprudence, a sleek, rosy-faced dame, fed with fees, and hung about with commentaries – she coughed through a tedious solo; and Chicanery played the bass-viol. Last of all entered Policy, in a triumphant car drawn by two mares, Weakness and Deceit. On her right sat Theology, holding in one hand a sharp-pointed dagger, and in the other a blazing torch. Policy herself wore a golden crown upon her head, and supported a sceptre over her right shoulder. She descended from the car, and danced with Theology a pas-de-deux, to which Cunning, Ambition, and Tyranny played on soft tinkling instruments (Klinger 33–34).

between the real and imaginary are not substantial and the very essence is the game of the imaginary and the present, throwing one instead of another (38). The principle of the struggle between the lie and the truth, being the basis for the image of a theater city, the replacement of the real by the imaginary, makes us perceive the Berlin scene as a farce, “in which the manager and primary actor performs the whole play, playing with the public and fooling the present audience” (Freidenberg 39), but Mann interprets a farce as a bloody buffoonery where the Nazi act is played by the comedians, clowns, masks: “They stood, pierced by curious glances of the best representatives of the chosen society—four rulers of the country, four comedians—the chief of advertising, a specialist in death sentences and bombers, a married ingenue and a pale play actor” (Mann, *Mephisto* 33). It is remarkable that Höfgen finds his place among these ruling comedians, as the deal with the devil provided “the poor hypocrite” with the status of the power, therefore, the involvement in that grand deception, the buffoonery simulation of the truth, played out on the Berlin stage, resulted in a triumph of “the pseudo” category, for example, “pseudo-gods” carefully monitor how “pseudo-actors” declare only lie, and the city itself seems to be losing its authenticity as “nobility was easily replaced with worldly manners being superior,” live music in the theater cafe is replaced with an electric piano, and the cakes *as if made of clay and cardboard*.

There is no place for the real and genuine in this “world of mirage and illusory” (Freidenberg). The divine energy of artistry is incompatible with the diabolical hypocrisy. The art workers, representing the true artistic principle in the novel, are expelled from the country. Oscar H. Kroge, Theophil Marder, Professor, Sebastian leave the Berlin stage as well as Germany. They are followed by Barbara, the ex-wife of Höfgen, and her father, the secret counselor Bruckner.

Juliette also becomes an emigrant. She, embodying a spontaneous Dionysian “ego,” becomes inappropriate and even dangerous for Höfgen who climbs the career ladder which allows entering the circle of those in power. To save the grace of his diabolical patrons, Höfgen renounces Juliette, in effect, handing her over to the Gestapo and forcing her to leave Germany. “*He lost her, sent her away. He was a traitor,*” the Dionysian shadow left Höfgen. Having rejected the Divine principle, Höfgen twisted his fortune with “*bloody adventurer,*” because the cooperation with them allowed quenching the thirst for power and recognition. Such was the price of favor from those in power.

However, as M. Blumenkrantz notes, the expulsion of the Divine principle turns into its return in demonic forms (62). Service to the Nazi regime is symbolically expressed in the novel by means of the motive of binding the

artist Höfgen with the demonic forces. Höfgen is so involved into the role of Mephistopheles, that this image is no longer a role.

The fusion of Hendrik with the Devil is evidenced by the symbolic loss of his own name, as Höfgen is called only “our Mephisto” in “the court” of the almighty Prime Minister. The moment of fusion with the Devil essentially changes the content of the Faustian archetype, as indicated by G. Ishimbayeva: “There is an irreversible transformation of Faust into Mephistopheles. The ambivalence peculiar to Faust in the Renaissance times<···> and continued to be a significant personality dominant during the Enlightenment, the Baroque and the Romantic periods, but it disappears in the era of the Empire when the character of the legendary hero acquires a monistic certainty and in this sense, wholeness and uniqueness, turning into a personality of the satanic type <···> The Faustian principle in him is completely superseded by the demonic, diabolical, and the Nazi Mephistopheles is born” (13).

The effect of such a “reincarnation” of images is also achieved by the fact that the loss of the Dionysian shadow symbolizes the destruction of human image, its transformation into the creature of the twilight afterlife that is the Devil, who is known to have neither a face nor a shadow. Instead of a face, he has the appearance, the disguise, Höfgen takes. So, the way to the heights of a career, is, in fact, a downward movement. Stages of this path reflect the moments of degradation of the artist’s image, forming a chain of transformations from “a holy face” to “a disguise.”

But the deformed space of the theater city, reminding a buffoonery, shows the image of the devil as distorted. In the above excerpt from the novel, which describes Höfgen as Mephistopheles, the author focuses on the fact that Mephisto performed by Hendrik is the devil in the mask of the clown: “*scamp*,” “*tragic clown*,” “*diabolical Pierrot*,” “*Harlequin*.” The way how the character interprets the legendary image lacks the devil’s all-destroying power, creating only an illusion of his power and, in a certain sense, anticipating the role that will be prepared for the actor by the power, and which, in effect, will predetermine the essence of the metamorphosis of the artist-man: Höfgen-Mephisto is a court jester under the Nazi regime, revealing an inner kinship with his representatives: “He [the Prime Minister] considers Höfgen-Mephistopheles to be a bit of a court jester and a brilliant scamp, a funny toy” (Mann, *Mephisto* 383); “Höfgen, perhaps, fits into this society, he has the same false dignity, the same hysterical impulse, the same vain cynicism and cheap demonism” (Mann, *Mephisto* 346). In the Nazi buffoonery, where, like in the Folk theater, “each of them is a simulation and the likeness of another; each of

them is a counterfeit one” (Freidenberg 40), the loss of one’s own identity and the transformation of the artist Höfgen are inevitable. The break with Juliette, leading to the disappearance of “the Dionysian shadow,” causes the degradation of the artistic principle in the image of Höfgen and the transformation of the artist-man into a hypocrite. In the role of the court jester Mephisto, the image of Höfgen, regressing, becomes identical to the image of the farce actor, who, according to O. Freidenberg, “is not yet “an actor,” but “a fool,” “a hypocrite,” “a charlatan,” “a swindler” (61). The betrayal of the Dionysian “ego” turns into a collapse of artistic talent for the protagonist. At the beginning of the narration he succeeded in performing the role of Hamlet, but at the end of the novel Höfgen fails, as the role of Hamlet can be performed just by the real actor, not a hypocrite.

Histrionics, meaning not creativity, but its imitation, substitution, served as the reason for the symbolic death of the character. Having transformed into a comedian, Höfgen lost the gift of creating new meanings. “Out of the art,” stressed F. Stepun, “the artistic path to the end merges with the tragic path, turning from a specific form of resolution of multip psyche into strangling of the soul ...” (56).

Conclusion

The close relationship between the images of the artist-man and Faust in Klaus Mann’s novel reveals the general preconditions for the degradation of the artistic and the decline of the Faustian principles. As M. Blumenkrantz points out, “there are two possibilities for a person to realize his freedom. Freedom, as a passion for creativity, strives to “be,” the will to implementation is triumphant. Freedom, as a passion for self-affirmation, seeks “to possess”; it manifests the will to excarnation and death” (63).

So, according to the scholar, the transformation of the artist into the hypocrite as well as Faust into Mephistopheles is caused by the substitution of “the implicit measure “to be” with “the explicit measure “to possess” (Blumenkrantz 98). Like Faust, Höfgen “bartered away” the desire “to be” an Artist to possess the power of the artist. The harmonious unity of the Dionysian and Apollonian principles in the image of the artist-man was broken by the rejection of one disguise in favor of the other, as a result, the image lost its integrity, because “the absolutization of any single disguise leads to the substitution, a part is the substitute for the whole, which destroys the harmony and demonizes the usurping principle <...> When the sense of unity is already lost, the person, asserting himself in one of the principles, inevitably comes into conflict with other principles, only exacerbating the detachment and discord” (Blumenkrantz 97). It seems that M. Blumenkrantz points

out the destroyed harmony and demonization of one absolute disguise are connected with the transformation of Faust into Mephistopheles.

The decline of the artistic and Faustian principles in Klaus Mann's novel embodied the writer's desire to comprehend the essence of historical and cultural processes. "Appearing" through the image of the theater city of the 20th century, the image of the buffoonery, embodying the prehistoric and pre-ethical principle of art, symbolically indicates the return of mankind to its primitive state. The novel keeps on stating the idea that the Nazi apocalypse has thrown the country into the darkness of barbarism, marking the collapse of civilization. The process of falling from the boundless peaks of the Faustian spirit to the prehistoric, primitive-barbaric state in the novel Klaus Mann is conceived as a process of changing the appearances of the artist, which brings the moment of *unmasking* the city and the person to the forefront. The image of the theater city, in its absurdly buffoonery modification, is a reflection of the fading image of an artist, in which the spiritual face of history is discerned as a gigantic horrific spectacle showing the end of the Faustian civilization.

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