DER TOD IN VENEDIG: NOVELLA INTO FILM

by

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ABSTRACT

The problem under investigation in this paper is that of the cinematic adaptation of Thomas Mann's novella Der Tod in Venedig. There are three main chapters.

Chapter one provides background on the film's director, Luchino Visconti. It establishes the corpus of thought and film production into which the literary text is first assimilated. Chapter two details the major result of the director's attempt both to be faithful to his source material and to express something of himself -- the changing of the novella's hero, Gustav von Aschenbach, from a writer into a composer loosely modelled on Gustav Mahler, and the concommitant use of music by Mahler. This pivotal change is discussed by an analysis of the director's own reasons for such a change and the pattern of ambiguity and irony created by the film's musical score. The third chapter deals with what has been gained and what lost in the process of adaptation; the gains derived from the visualisation of Venice and certain of the novella's characters, the loss of the philosophic dimension and the sense of tragedy. Individual additions and deletions are discussed with the stress being on the inclusion of the ten flashback sequences. The concluding remarks establish the individuality of Morte a Venezia, distinguishing between Mann's "tragic" novella and Visconti's cinematic melodrama.
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"To draw is to subtract"
Max Liebermann

Liebermann's dictum is quoted in Realism in our Time by Georg Lukács, who goes on to amplify it into an admittedly overly abstract definition: "art is the selection of the essential and subtraction of the inessential" (p. 53). Liebermann's aphorism loses none of its force if the artist in question paints his pictures with light and shadow, imprinting his images on celluloid through complicated physical and chemical processes. The role of choice, of discretion, remains paramount. But before being faced with the problem of internal composition and mounting, our artist must first choose a subject in keeping with his medium of expression.

Luchino Visconti chose to adapt Thomas Mann's Der Tod in Venedig to the screen. This initial choice will entail many additions and deletions vis à vis the basic text; that the novella will be distorted is inevitable, even desirable -- to a point unfaithfulness is a requisite for faithfulness.¹ For film adaptation is largely a matter of analogy. In adapting novel or novella to the screen, the adaptor is advised to consider the narrative prose as raw material: "He looks not to the organic novel, whose language is inseparable from its theme, but to characters and incidents which have somehow detached themselves from language and ... have achieved a mythic life of their own."² Close attention must be given to the process of concretizing this raw material, for films act upon us perceptually -- "between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies
the root difference between the two media\textsuperscript{3} -- and are therefore hard put to capture concepts or verbal abstractions. The pressure of the physical and of objects and details is inescapable: "Emphasized or not, invited or not, the physical world through the intensifications of photography never stops insisting on its presence and relevance."\textsuperscript{4}

When transferred to the screen, literariness acquires a different weight or specificity and varying degrees of obviousness that may do harm to the writer's original idea. It is this germinative idea that must be sought out and considered in terms of its cinematic adaptability and effectiveness.

Seeking to "ripercorrere il cammino iniziale (e non il risultato terminale) dell'ispirazione artistica"\textsuperscript{5} of Mann, leads Visconti to seek the analogous situation or detail and not simply to transfer the principal elements of Mann's story directly to the screen. In a film that is already rather long this distillation of the story, this effort to make \textit{tabula rasa}, capture the essential in Mann's story, and with it firmly in mind to create one's own work of art, is veritably the only path open to Visconti. The measure of Visconti's success will in part be revealed in his "selection of the essential" and in the additions to and subtractions from the text which he deems necessary for the expression of this essence.

This process of addition and subtraction will inevitably yield both gain and loss \textit{vis à vis} the original text. \textit{Der Tod in Venedig} is a profoundly intellectual and ambiguous novella written in an
elegant, eminently literary style which does not facilitate screen adaptation. The visualisation of Aschenbach and Venice, and the added dimension of the film's musical score can be very effectively handled, but will be hampered in their efforts to adequately express the novella's psychological insights and the underlying philosophical content which comes to the fore in the final Socratic discourse. That which is much more readily filmable in Der Tod in Venedig and which constitutes the essence Visconti extracts from the tragedy of Gustav von Aschenbach, is the melodrama which is in every tragedy. Visconti feels at home in the manners of melodrama -- its purposeful exaggeration and freedom of feeling -- and in "the morals of melodrama - the projection upon the world of our irresponsible narcissistic fantasies." Thus his attempt to achieve "an emotional response to the total impact of the narrative," to express the effect and feel of the text. An effort to understand Visconti's positive approach to melodrama is a precondition for any appraisal of Morte a Venezia. Thus in addition to measuring Visconti's success in terms of Der Tod in Venedig, allowance must be made for the interpolation of his own ideas and personality.

Visconti's personal background and cinematic experience substantiate his ability to perform the very ambitious task of giving Mann's novella film form. In doing so Visconti produces a tightly structured film of great beauty, both aurally, by means of Mahler's Adagietto, and visually, by means of an unobtrusive camera and
sensitive attention to the details and surfaces which provide such expedient substance for film. The result is the effective expression of the novella's mood of refined sensuality and decadence. Indeed, of the novella's qualities, Visconti can hope to capture little more than this mood. The novella's primary concerns -- the philosophic dimension, the ambiguous concurrent rise and fall of Aschenbach, the literary parody -- are concerns not easily expressed in film; the intellectuality and ambiguity reintroduced by Visconti do not make up for that which is lost as an inevitable result of transliteration. The film adaptation of Der Tod in Venedig is a recreation of Thomas Mann's novella in an artistic medium which is hard put to give it adequate expression.
REFERENCES

2. Bluestone. *Novels into Film*. p. 62
3. Ibid. p. 1
4. Marcus. *Film and Literature*. p. xiii
5. Miccichè. *op. cit.* p. 75
7. Ibid. p. 212
Visconti (b. 1906) produced his first film, *Ossessione*, in 1942. Prior to this time his main artistic stimulus had been provided by Jean Renoir, for whom he had designed costumes in Paris in 1936, and with whom he worked in 1939 on the adaptation of the Sardou/Puccini *La Tosca*, later becoming assistant director of the film. Like *Morte a Venezia*, Visconti's first film also makes use of a literary source — James Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* — freely adapted to the needs of Visconti and a war-torn, fascist Italy. *Ossessione* already reveals two important aspects of Visconti's filmography which will reoccur frequently: his taste for stories about destruction and ruin, and for stories in which his characters suffer defeat — *Ossessione* is a story of corrosive sexual passion and betrayal, as are basically *Senso* (1954), *Rocco e i Suoi Fratelli* (1960), *Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa* (1965) and *La Caduta degli Dei* (1969).

Though not generally considered a member of the Italian neo-realist movement, Visconti did produce a film very representative of the movement — "l'unico grande film marxista del neorealismo"¹ — in *La Terra Trema* (1947). Adapted from Verga's *I Malavoglia*, the film incorporates that dialectic peculiar to Visconti, his aristocratic background and culture on the one hand and his rational and marxist Weltanschauung on the other, in that fundamental ambiguity and openness peculiar to his art. The realities of life in Sicily and the attempt to present an expose of the exploited impoverished masses,
are subtly filtered through Visconti's refined aesthetic sensibility and sense of theatre (his work in the theatre and in opera has continued unabated since 1937); the pessimistic fatalism and the materialism evident in the film are offset by "a more optimistic intellectual conception of the possibilities of human action;" the harshness of both image and concept is tempered by stylised lyricism -- La Terra Trema is an exact transposition into the film medium of those operatic procedures which mark the style of his later study of decadence and trasformismo, Senso. The latter, adapted from the novella of the same name by Camillo Boito, retains that dialectic which is central to Visconti's work, but moves away from the more direct apprehension of reality of his first films, employing greater cultural and intellectual mediation, elements of melodrama, and setting up an ideal world of art, especially opera and painting, to mitigate the failure of socialist action, i.e. the Revolution in Venice in 1866.

Visconti's next major feature film, Rocco e i Suoi Fratelli, most clearly expresses the problematic centre of all his work: "a conception of the world which is consistent in its opposition of two conflicting ideals, one rooted emotionally in the past, and the other projected intellectually into the future." This conception is also very forcefully put in Visconti's second risorgimento film, Il Gattopardo (1963). Both films give great scope to the demands made on the characters by a new order. In the former, the
inability to adapt leads to tragedy, with Visconti's usual ambivalence expressed in the inevitability of the tragedy and in the vague possibility of something better to come. In the latter, attempted revolution again fails, and the aristocracy gains an ironic victory, living on in a world wreathed in nostalgia, a world which for Visconti

aveva preso a morire nella seconda parte dell'800 quando gli ultimi "gattopardi" si erano inginocchiati a contemplare le stelle in solitudine, incapaci di accettare il nuovo e troppo intelligenti per ancorarsi al vecchio; ed aveva concluso la propria agonia nell'11, su una spiaggia veneziana, ricercando la Bellezza e la Morte in una consapevole volontà di autodissolvimento, tendendo la mano verso orizzonti ormai impossibili.5

Visconti's three most recent films are especially significant with regard to Morte a Venezia. Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa (English title: Sandra), a story of forbidden passion (incest) and the resurgence of a repressed past, echoes with outside literary allusions, and makes heavy use generally of a "vistoso apparato culturale". The theme of decadence and death is again in evidence, as it is, too, in the film immediately preceding Morte a Venezia, La Caduta degli Dei (English title: The Damned). The latter is an involved allegory set against an almost overwhelming background of incipient Nazism and big business in the Germany of 1933/34. The theme of death, here, specifically, murder, is intensified through the skillful manipulation
of historical data, and through the rendering of the characters' unconscious by realistic, ideally filmic connotations of an explicitly sensual nature. The film is an opera with atmosphere and effects in high Wagnerian style. Between these two films Visconti produced Lo Straniero (1967), adapted from the novel by Camus. This was Visconti's second attempt at filming a major literary text; his first had been quite a faithful and successful rendering of Lampedusa's novel Il Gattopardo. Lo Straniero, however, follows the text even more closely. Through a use of realistic detail which betrays to the full Visconti's mania for precision and authenticity, it successfully evokes the oppressive atmosphere of Algiers. In keeping with the nature of film, profound philosophical implications are largely absent. A tendency towards melodrama is evident. Electronic music and the device of the off-stage voice are also employed in the film.

Any purview of Visconti's filmography must be posited around his early neo-realist-like films, and his more recent films with their overriding stress on aesthetic considerations. The direction of his work has been away from films of social relevance towards the self-contained, personal statement; authorial intrusion in the form of a lyrical, theatrical element and a superimposed, often recondite show of culture is discernible in many of his outwardly realistic and documentary film sequences, but it is with his more recent films that the aesthetic consideration comes...
closest to being sufficient unto itself.

Visconti is a marxist aristocrat. This anomaly plays a vital part in his work. *La Terra Trema* is his most outright marxist film despite the reservations alluded to above. Although adherence to a rigid marxist doctrine is out of the question for Visconti, his films do retain a critical attitude towards the bourgeoisie, and a great awareness of the need for and inevitability of social change. He chooses periods of great upheaval, periods of historic remove already romantic or nostalgic -- for 1967 *L'Etranger* is arguably already somewhat dated -- and presents the lower classes with sympathetic insight in a manner that treads a narrow path, being on the one hand realistic and analytical and on the other hand romantic and caressing. This is true even of those films which are more unilaterally critical of society. *Rocco e i Suoi Fratelli*, and his only essay into the field of comedy, the 1951 *Bellissima*, both partake of a strong Italian character and a ready actuality evolving around an analysis of society in transition. Yet both counter the modern and everyday by the depiction of idealised family or marital relations.

Visconti has said that his three most esteemed authors [sic] are on the one hand Chekhov, and on the other Verdi and Shakespeare. He continues: "Verdi et le mélodrame italien ont été mon premier amour" -- this in 1961. His recent films would seem to indicate
that the latter are now definitely in the ascendant; indeed his work has been qualified as "cinematic opera". With the years the aristocrat and accomplished musician, the man of culture seems to have gained the upper hand from the socialist with a bent for critical realism. Certainly Visconti is thoroughly familiar with most aspects of European culture. His eclecticism is astounding and undeniable, with interests and practical experience ranging from Euripides to Arthur Miller, from Donizetti to Hans Werner Henze. With the passage of time, he has oriented himself towards a single genre, melodrama, and a single style, operatic. He has made these tendencies, which are discernible from the time of his first films, his present hallmark. Whole new areas of artistic possibility, subjects and themes both old and new can be reappraised in the light of this evolved field of interest and this set technique. One such theme, considered for years yet postponed because Visconti felt he lacked sufficient maturity and experience, was "il tema della resa dei conti, che la maturità e l'esperienza sollecitano e che è nella novella di Mann". Only after La Caduta degli Dei, "cioè quasi alla conclusione di un discorso in più capitoli che vado facendo da anni" does Visconti feel capable of affronting "una mia antica aspirazione", the filming of Der Tod in Venedig.
REFERENCES

1. Miccichè, L. Morte a Venezia. p. 23
3. Ibid. p. 53
4. Ibid. p. 178
5. Miccichè, L. op. cit. p. 41
7. Ibid. p. 132
8. Premier Plan. 17, 1961, pp. 65-70
9. Miccichè, L. op. cit. p. 111
10. Ibid. p. 111
The single most striking and important innovation wrought by Visconti in adapting Der Tod in Venedig for the screen is that of changing Aschenbach into a musician. The change can be viewed as a wilful distortion of Mann's hero, or as "la più geniale intuizione del film, il suo aspetto piú creativo e piú fecondo."1 The following chapter will attempt to analyse this important change. Basic reasons for the alteration, such as the greater cinematic effectiveness of a musician, the homologies Visconti/Mahler, Aschenbach/Mahler, and the connection with Doktor Faustus, are readily recognizable. The bulk of the chapter deals with the related question of parody, first in Der Tod in Venedig, then in Morte a Venezia. In the latter case the ambiguity cultivated in order to create parody suggests that the Adagietto theme can be gainfully viewed both as being and as not being Aschenbach's own music. In both cases the effect is one not of parody but of irony.

In a letter to the editor of Saturday Review Visconti speaks of having changed Aschenbach into a musician "solely for visual and practical film-making reasons". 2 He elaborates elsewhere:

Il punto di partenza fondamentale ë che al cinema è piú "rappresentabile" un musicista che un letterato, poiché, mentre di un musicista puoi sempre fare sentire la musica, per un letterato sei costretto a ricorrere ad espedienti fastidiosi e poco espressivi come la voce in "off".3

Two other reasons played a part in Visconti's decision to change Mann's lionized neo-classic writer into a romantic musician:
Firstly, he knew Mann had used Gustav Mahler's first name and facial features in composing his portrait of Aschenbach, and he sensed, both from what Mann had said about Mahler and from historical fact, a certain similarity in the artistic temperaments of Gustav Mahler and Gustav Aschenbach. Secondly, Visconti recognized the filiation running through Mann's works by means of which Adrian Leverkuehn, the musician/protagonist of Doktor Faustus, can be viewed as a descendant of Gustav Aschenbach.

Visconti's basic reason for changing Aschenbach into a musician occasions certain questions. Is the figure of a musician really more filmable than that of a writer? And is the film's protagonist clearly identified as the composer of the film's background music?

The first question can be answered positively. The more readily filmable quality of a musician rests upon the fact that his artistic creation can actually be projected by means of quoting from his work. Both artists' compositions can be rendered aurally. Alfried could certainly recite hypothetical lines both on- and off-camera from Ein Elender or Maya. Yet one invariably feels that the film's musical accompaniment is more effective than the vocal accompaniment which would be provided by an off-camera voice, and is much more effective than an on-camera recital which would break the film's motion.

Whether the film's music, viz. the Adagietto, is clearly identified
as Aschenbach's creation or not, it is his by association. The figure of Gustav Aschenbach musician is more "rappresentabile" than that of Gustav Aschenbach writer not because we necessarily hear his music throughout the film, but because the Adagietto leitmotif must adhere to him, must be associated with him in the viewer's mind. In addition, the musical can more easily be fused with the visual, informing Aschenbach's actions with a poignancy and colour inexpressible by means of any other medium, and it is certainly smoother to superimpose musical commentary on the film than to have to have recourse to the clumsy expedient Visconti mentions. Making Aschenbach a musician allows his character and state of mind to be expressed by means which are more properly cinematic. The loss of textual fidelity is more than made up for by the gain in deeper and more effective characterization.

The second question can be answered negatively. Aschenbach is only suggested as the composer of the Adagietto from Mahler's Fifth Symphony. In view of the many allusions to Mahler, an overly explicit identification of Aschenbach with the score would risk making the film a rather derogatory biography. As a result, the most explicit reference to Aschenbach's authorship of the Adagietto is found in shot sixty-six, the hour-glass flashback, where Alfridi plays the opening leitmotif on the piano in his friend's presence. Although a short phrase from Mahler's Fourth is clearly identified as being Aschenbach's in shot one hundred-four, the first major
flashback between the hero and Alfried, any such reference to the Adagietto must be absent, for the Adagietto must serve both as Mahler's music and as Aschenbach's music. Its persistence throughout the film and its being a composition by Mahler link it with Aschenbach, but any more direct relation between the two is purposefully avoided. More on this ambiguity later.

Franco Mannino, the music director for *Morte a Venezia*, has drawn attention to the close affinity between the personalities of Mahler and Visconti. For him the use of Mahler's music in the film is a veritable *sine qua non*. Perhaps the most striking feature common to both men is the tendency to express a certain decadence in their work. Mahler is usually spoken of in terms of being a romantic, expressing the cultural malaise of the *fin de siècle*, the rift between artist and society, and a gentle nostalgia, to the point that "Mahler seems to be considered the last exponent of an exhausted art form" [i.e. the symphony]. For his part, Visconti also, like Mahler, has a strong sense of his own individuality, revealed particularly — and here again the same holds true for Mahler — in his stage productions. Like Mahler, Visconti is intent on expressing ideational content in his art. Mahler felt that "orchestration should serve only to expose an idea clearly, and should not aim at creating color". Yet he amassed an enormous orchestra for his Eighth Symphony (The Symphony of a Thousand) and often let his brilliant orchestration become the very essence of the composition. So Visconti too, though intent on expounding that which is neither properly cinematic nor
musical, namely ideas, tends to marshal his cinematic effects in a display of virtuosity and beautiful pictures.

It is worth noting that on two previous occasions Visconti's films had connections with Mahler. The first was the use of music by Bruckner, Mahler's popular contemporary in Vienna during the eighteen eighties and nineties, in the film Senso. The second was Visconti's intention, before the objection of his American producers, to use music by Mahler in La Caduta degli Dei. In addition to this empathy, Visconti is genuinely interested in the period of circa 1911-18, especially in its importance for the European bourgeoisie. It is neither by chance nor lightly that Visconti speaks of plans for deriving films from A la Recherche du Temps Perdu and Der Zauberb erg.

In addition to the Mahler/Visconti affinity there is a verifiable affinity between Mahler and Aschenbach. Mann's use of Mahler's first name and facial features for his portrait of Aschenbach has been alluded to. The full context of the letter to Wolfgang Born in which Mann discusses this point is as follows:

In die Konzeption meiner Erzaehlung spielte, Fruehsommer 1911, die Nachricht vom Tode Mahlers hinein, dessen Bekantschaft ich vordem in Muenchen hatte machen duerfen, und dessen verzehrend intensive Persoenlichkeit den sterksten Eindruck auf mich gemacht hatte. Auf der Insel Brioni, wo ich mich zur Zeit seines Abscheidens aufhielt, verfolgte ich in der Wiener Presse die in fuerstlichem Stile gehaltenen Bulletins ueber seine letzten Stunden, und indem sich spater diese Erschuetterungen mit den Eindruecken und Ideen vermischten, aus denen die Novelle hervorging, gab ich meinem orgiastischer Aufloesung verfallenen Helden nicht nur den
Vornamen des grossen Musikers, sondern verlieh ihm auch bei der Beschreibung seines Aeusseren die Maske Mahlers, — wobei ich sicher sein mochte, dass bei einem so lockeren und versteckten Zusammenhange der Dinge von einem Erkennen aufseiten der Leserschaft garnicht wuerde die Rede sein koennen.  

Mention might also be made of a letter from Mann to Mahler of September 1910 in which Mann speaks of the Viennese composer as the man "in dem sich, wie ich zu erkennen glaube, der ernsteste und heiligste kuenstlerische Wille unserer Zeit verkoerpert" — a statement highly applicable to Aschenbach. Certainly the presence of Mahler in Der Tod in Venedig does not prevent the inclusion of references to or reminders of other artists including Goethe, Platen, Mann himself, and most important for the question of music, of Richard Wagner.

For the film Visconti chooses Mahler to serve as a natural focal point around which to build the new creation of Gustav von Aschenbach, composer. Once the decision has been made to change Aschenbach into a composer, Visconti can make use of Mahler as he might make use of any composer to give his new creation dimension and substance. Although the richness of Mann's Aschenbach is lost, (that character created through a montage of characteristics garnered from other individuals being very difficult to express in film), Visconti has managed to preserve a measure of ambiguity in his portrayal of the character, to make use of that "aporia fondamentale" so indicative of his work as a whole and so well suited on this particular occasion
to express the ambivalence of Aschenbach's make-up and to allow for infusions, "étottements", from other sources to round out the character of his protagonist. One such other source is *Doktor Faustus*.

Visconti's main borrowings from *Doktor Faustus* will be discussed in examining certain of the flashback scenes in which they figure so prominently. In so far as Aschenbach's character as a musician is concerned, however, Visconti uses his gleanings from *Doktor Faustus* not only to make his character more "Mann" in compensation for his having made him more "Visconti", but also again to strengthen his new creation with the thoughts and problems besetting a "real" composer. Visconti uses Mann's most profound statement on the problem of the artist in society as a means of animating and substantiating his own Aschenbach.

Finally, Mahler is, of course, also present in *Doktor Faustus*. Zeitblom himself draws attention to the influence of Mahler on Adrian's songs in chapter twenty, and no less an authority than Theodor Adorno, Mann's music mentor and "wirkliche geheime Rat" for *Doktor Faustus*, recognizes that Adrian Leverkuehn "mehr von Mahler empfing als bloss das hohe g der Celli vom Ende der ersten Nachtmusik der Siebenten Symphonie."10

One further reason for changing Aschenbach into a musician is implicit in Visconti's cinematic style. This is the opportunity to utilize the sound track as a formal constituent of the film; in other words to conjoin the music and the montage process. This "symphonic structure" of the film is best isolated by Micciche:
Morte a Venezia, piú che da "scene", "sequenze" o gruppi di sequenze ... risulta composto da "movimenti" o "tempi" ... che sovente unificano tra loro sequenze e gruppi di sequenze sovente irrelate del punto di vista dell'unità di tempo luogo ed azione, e rispetto alle quali non di rado la partitura musicale mahleriana ... funge da elemento di coagulo e da registro ritmico.Visconti chose the Adagietto from Mahler's Fifth because it worked the best, because it fused with the visual, as he explains it, "a perfezione, come se fosse stato predisposto 'ad hoc', coincidendo con immagini, movimenti, tagli, ritmi interni." The music is colour-toned to evoke the sultry, oppressive atmosphere of the Lido, to wed the image of Venice to the sea, to relate Aschenbach to his ironic adversary, the plague-ridden, fallen Queen of the Seas. The music emphasizes the fluid, hazy visuals that float languidly past Visconti's stationery cameras. The choice of music is brilliant; but so is the music itself. One of Visconti's most difficult tasks is to give us images that are capable of affirming their own life, capable of speaking above a musical score that is itself very assertive.

Beyond those reasons for changing Aschenbach into a musician which are acknowledged by Visconti or are implicit in his style as an auteur, there lies perhaps the most important reason for his employment of musician and music. This is his attempt to use music for purposes of parody.

"Ma l'arte é ambigua, sempre. E la musica é la piú ambigua di tutte le arti ... Sí, Gustav, é l'ambiguità elevata a sistema."
In these lines of Alfried taken almost verbatim from Doktor Faustus, Visconti seems to allude to what is the tonal key of Morte a Venezia. His "aporia fondamentale" has already been referred to; in Morte a Venezia he will develop it to an unprecedented level of ambiguity in an effort to create stylistic parody in the film imitative of that of Mann in Der Tod in Venedig.

That the style of Der Tod in Venedig is parodistic has been well established. Three statements of Mann are especially enlightening on this subject. The first is his reference, in a long letter to Carl Maria Weber of July 4, 1920, to Die Wahlverwandtschaften, "die ich wahrend der Arbeit am T.i V. [sic], wenn ich recht erinnere, fuenf mal gelesen habe." Though it may be going too far to say that Mann is adapting Goethe's style for his own ends, it seems reasonable to expect certain elements of Goethe's exemplary classical prose to appear in the story Mann first conceived of as "die-grotesk gesehene-Geschichte des Greises Goethe zu jenem kleinen Maedchen in Marienbad." Familiarity with an earlier, classical style of writing is cultivated by Mann for the purpose of creating parody.

A second statement throws light on the process of objectification and narratorial effacement, "eine geheimnisvolle Anpassung des Persoenlichen an das Sachliche," which is employed in Der Tod in Venedig for creating parody. Writing in Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, Mann criticizes those who labour under the misconception, "als sei die 'hieratische Atmosphäre', der 'Meisterstil' dieser Erzaehlung ein persoenlicher Anspruch, etwas, womit ich mich zu umgeben
In the third personal statement on the style of Der Tod in Venedig Mann is the most explicit: "Unter uns gesagt ist der Stil meiner Novelle etwas parodistisch. Es handelt sich um eine Art von Mimikry, die ich liebe und unwillkuerlich uebe." Understanding the word parody in Mann's sense of the word — "parody being used by him exclusively with reference to matters of technique, form or diction ... its substance an artistic tradition whose idiom has become antiquated" — one perceives the novella's parody as directed towards the literary style of Gustav von Aschenbach. Mann's style

ahmt den geistigen Habitus Aschenbachs nach. So wie der Erzaehler die Welt gewissermassen durch Aschenbachs Augen sieht, so gleicht sich uber weite Strecken — etwa im zweiten Kapitel — sein Stil dem fiktiven Stil Aschenbachs an.

Diese Feststellung genuegt jedoch nicht. Wir haben gesehen, dass die Position des Erzaehlers mit der Aschenbachs identisch ist, dass sie zugleich aber Aschenbachs Position transzendiert. So bleibe der Stil auch nicht bei der Nachahmung stehen, sondern schlaegt um in die Parodie. Der Stil der Novelle ist also Imitation und Parodie zugleich. Das ist der zentrale Punkt, von dem aus der Stil der Novelle zu interpretieren ist.

Through the self-imposed restriction of seeing everything only through Aschenbach's eyes and never through those of Tadzio, or any other character, the narrator sets up Aschenbach's conscience as a prism through which the reader views the world.
All the observations and events of the story are transmitted through "die Beobachtungen und Begegnisse des Einsam-Stummen". The form Aschenbach gives to these experiences reveals not only what is his literary style. Since his life can only be understood in terms of his art, this formalizing of experience also comments upon his life -- "so spiegelt sich im Stil der Novelle Aschenbachs Schicksal: das Fassadenhafte seiner Existenz, die klassizistische Stilisierung und die reine Form. So drückt der Stil das zugleich aus, was er darstellt."22 At the same time that the narrator imposes the discipline of a restricted field of vision upon himself, he does, however, still enjoy omniscience. He passes moral judgements on his hero and introduces material which belies the imperiousness and calm of Aschenbach's artistic style and life, material which will become more and more difficult to be held at bay by the sublime and distancing formality of the language of a cultivated bourgeois. Despite a content dealing increasingly with what is immoral, perverse and inadmissible, and despite the great strain put upon it, the elevated style remains intact to the last sentence of the novella: "Der Gegensatz von Schein und Sein, Anspruch und Wirklichkeit [tritt] mit dem Fortgang der Novelle immer deutlicher hervor."23 It is Aschenbach's parodied style which makes this disparity so striking, and which expresses his character in such a unique, forceful manner.24

Mann's parody is built up out of linguistic components -- the frequent use of dated genitive constructions, foreign or antiquated
expressions, classical allusions and rhetorical devices, a certain Greek Sprachstil and even metre -- these are the means employed to enable us to read Aschenbach in his own writing. Visconti's attempted parody is built up out of musical components, viz. the six appearances of the Adagietto leitmotif. But the film's musical score is part of a cultural overlay only added to the basic "language" of the film afterwards; Aschenbach is not heard in the film's "language" -- the individual shots mounted through the montage process -- the way he is read in the novella's language. On the other hand, if we do hear Aschenbach in the musical score, it is his very own composition we hear and not an imitation of his style. Yet how is Visconti to express by means of his parodistic device the position of the narrator? If the music is clearly defined as Aschenbach's there is definite gain; but the transcendent position of Mann's narrator is lost. It is through the deliberate cultivation of ambiguity, through the already mentioned purposeful avoidance of distinct identification of Aschenbach and Adagietto, that Visconti will try to regain that position of the narrator wherein alone the possibility of parody resides. This ambiguity can be clearly viewed by studying first the import of the Adagietto's not being by Aschenbach, and then by considering it his composition.

To contend that the Adagietto is not by Aschenbach is to stress the fact that it is nowhere clearly stated as being so. The most opportune moment for doing so is passed over -- this is the opening shot (383) of the fiasco scene. That the music which the audience starts to boo and hiss is Aschenbach's is plain from the
strangely personal nature of Alfried's criticism. The c-minor chord with which the scene opens is not part of the Adagietto which has just ceased playing with the immediately preceding shot; neither does it tell us anything about Aschenbach's music. Allusions and references to Mahler employed to bring Aschenbach and Adagietto together in the viewer's mind remain just that. The identification of Aschenbach as the composer of the phrases from Mahler's Fourth played by Alfried in shot one hundred-four for instance, is too esoteric and erudite an identification to firmly associate Aschenbach with the Adagietto. Or again, in shots two hundred twenty-three and twenty-four, when Aschenbach picks up his lined notepaper and starts to write at the moment when the short quotation from the fourth movement of Mahler's Third is first heard -- the suggestion that this betokens his writing of those very lines (cf. Miccichè, p. 83) is not really convincing. The final argument against Aschenbach being the composer of the Adagietto is provided by the nature of the Adagietto itself. How could the recipient of all Alfried's criticism possibly be the composer of such an ultra-romantic piece as the Adagietto? Through Alfried's criticism and Aschenbach's own words in three of the key flashback scenes one is given a picture of an artist whose outlook on art and life is identical with that of Mann's Aschenbach. The same preoccupations with form, morality, pure beauty, abstraction of the senses -- the same preoccupations characterize both artists. Such essentially classical qualities are incommensurate
with a piece of music that has been dismissed by some as mere "Schmalz".

If then, the Adagietto is not only not by Aschenbach, but is also music of a nature diametrically opposed to the kind he would be capable of writing, it acquires a certain mocking, ironic tone. Placed in its symphonic context, however, it purveys an even more profound and erudite dimension.

Mahler's symphonic output falls into four distinct phases; symphonies One through Four form a first group, Five through Seven a second, Nine, Ten, and the symphonic Lied von der Erde a third, and the Eighth stands alone. The symphonies of the second period, divided from the first by the Kindertotenlieder, are marked by the absence of the Vokal-Lyrik and programmatic quality so marked in his previous work. They present, instead, the employment of a more traditional, instrumental style, "an approach to a new employment of the classic structural devices." It is with the Fifth, "the contrapuntal symphony", that Mahler's use of counterpoint first attains any prominence, that a "striking simplicity of outline" erodes the sometime extravagance of his earlier symphonies, and that he first broaches the instrumental, polyphonic style: "Das subjektiv Liedmaessige verschwindet, es laesst sich in die inhaltlich objekti-vierende Darstellung des reinen sinfonischen Instrumentalstiles." It is with the Fifth that Mahler the philosopher of music really comes into the foreground:
Hier ist unverhüllt das, was man im früheren Sinne sinfonisch thematische Arbeit genannt, und was Mahler bisher vermieden hat. Die straffe Bindung und entwicklungsmaessige Behandlung der Gedanken, die nicht mehr triebhafte, sondern gedanklich bewusste Ausdrucksformung gewinnt fuer Mahler neue Bedeutung.\(^28\)

Mahler's Fifth Symphony marks the first step in this process of a maturing, more introspective and intellectual nature. The symphony was written in five movements, but can be broken down into three. The opening \textit{Trauermarsch} is actually an introduction to the symphony and not the first movement at all. It portrays a kind of \textit{thanatopsis},\(^29\) to be contrasted by the second Allegro movement. Like the third Scherzo movement, the second is also built on the sonata principle. The \textit{Adagietto} is the symphony's fourth movement. It stands in complete contrast to all that precedes and follows: "Aufgabe des Adagietto ist Vermittlung zwischen der Apotheose der Kraft an sich, wie sie das Scherzo gebracht hatte, und der Fruchtbarmachung dieser Kraft, die dem Finale vorbehalten ist."\(^30\)

What is to follow the \textit{Adagietto} in the Rondo-Finale is "no longer the exhibition of strength delighting in itself -- of living for the sake of living -- but a more lofty philosophy; and this Adagietto is really the introduction to that thought."\(^31\) Thus, though "ein Traum der Einsamkeit ... der Weltvergessenheit, des Sichverlierens im eigenen Wesens, der stillen, beglueckenden Gewissheit des Wachens aus dem eigenen Inneren,"\(^32\) the highly personal, delicate and concise \textit{Adagietto} moves towards the abstract, the universal:
It is vital that this symphony [the Fifth] should be understood as a whole; the pernicious practice, for instance, of playing the fourth movement (the Adagietto) by itself has prevented its function from being understood. In the symphony this "sentimental little Adagietto", as it has often been called when heard separately, becomes a major point of irony and lights up the whole finale, to which it is an introduction; the point of its main melody becomes clear only in the last movement.33

The Adagietto is therefore part of a resolution. The Adagietto-Gedanke woven through the fugue and chorale themes is part of the triumph and of the reaffirmation of life of the Rondo-Finale. By the end of the movement "es kommt nicht mehr zum Traeumen, es draengt weiter zur Tat, zum Vollbringen ... Der Wille hat gesiegt, das Leben ist neu gewonnen."34 The passive and emotional element is resolved with the "stuermisch bewegt, mit groesstem Vehemenz" of the second movement and the "kraeftig, nicht zu schnell" of the third in a final movement of joy and transcendence. The romantic Adagietto is part of this intricate formalising of themes and feelings expressed in terms of a not unclassical nature. It is an intrinsic part of the symphony's formal solution:

Form als zwangmaessige Darstellung und Verkoerperung eines innerlich Werdenden, nach Gestaltung Draengenden ist immer wieder das Problem des Mahlerschen Schaffens. Dieses Problem findet jetzt [i.e. in the fifth movement] eine neue, das alte Schema aus innerstem Lebenswillen wieder gebaerende Losung.35

To return to Morte a Venezia: in addition then to its role of mocking the staid, self-confident bourgeois Gustav von Aschenbach
with a form of artistic expression so far removed from his own
defensive and helpless aesthetic, the Adagietto is, as in the
symphony, part of a resolution. It is something of a goal, of an
ideal, a solution to the dilemma of art Aschenbach is faced with.
It holds out the possibility of a viable, redemptive art, a synthesis
of tradition and innovation. The new form thus produced is not
redolent of Aschenbach's "moralismo della forma", but is postulated
on recognition of the ambiguity of form:

Und hat Form nicht zweierlei Gesicht? Ist
sie nicht sittlich und unsittlich zugleich,
-- sittlich als Ergebnis und Ausdruck der
Zucht, unsittlich aber und selbst widersittlich,
sörfm sie von Natur eine moralische Gleichguel-
tigkeit in sich schliesst, ja wesentlich bestrebt
ist, das Moralische unter ihr stolzes und
unumschraenktes Szepter zu beugen?\textsuperscript{36}

The Adagietto presents an alternative to Aschenbach's antiquated
and highly unpopular music. It offers spiritual and physical
rejuvenation. Moreover, it is not impossible for Aschenbach to
attain this artistic ideal which is so unlike his own. In a film
overwhelmed with Mahler references, Visconti establishes subtle
lines joining the romantic composer Mahler and the inhibited discip-
linarian Aschenbach. He is aware that the Adagietto is not just
the expression of the arch-Germanic characteristic -- \textit{Innerlichkeit};
in an interview Visconti himself quotes Mann's letter to Mahler,
"l'uomo 'nel quale si incarna la più sacra e severa volontà artistica
del nostro tempo'."\textsuperscript{37} Aschenbach's life is brought closer to Mahler's
through the use of Mahler music and biographical data; and even if
the Adagietto is not music by Aschenbach, viewed in its symphonic
context and in the light of the discipline and seriousness of purpose
that went into its composition, it does display some features common
to the hypothetical music of Aschenbach.

Like the position of the narrator in Der Tod in Venedig, the
position of the Adagietto in Morte a Venezia is one of transcendence.
It functions as superimposed, detached commentary. But lacking the
quality of imitation enjoyed by the narrator's position, the Adagietto
cannot evolve into parody. Without the imitative quality essential
for parody, the Adagietto cannot present a distortion at once play­
ful and mocking, deliberate and earnest, of the protagonist's artistic
style, and the character of the man reflected in that style, the
way Mann's narrator can. The Adagietto must remain at the level of
a very intricate irony. With the allusive Mahler threads running
through the film it constitutes the third most important "character"
in the film.

To contend that the Adagietto is by Aschenbach is to stress the
fact that the adhesion or association of protagonist and music is
irresistible. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Visconti would claim
that a musician is more "filmic" than a writer, since his music
can be incorporated into the film's sound track, and then turn
around and not do just that. Visconti first established the essen­
tially romantic characterization of Mann's hero, then chose the
Adagietto from the many Mahler excerpts he examined to represent
Aschenbach's artistry. It fits his senescent pariah and pedophiliac perfectly. Aschenbach's music bespeaks what is going on inside him. It is used to reveal his sense of triumph as he returns from the railway station to the hotel, or to emphasize his feeling of total defeat as he slumps by the well in the deserted square. And there is indeed very strong irony in the creation of such beautiful music by one grown so debauched, one fallen so low. There is further irony in the sensuous yearning sounds of the strings and harp set against plague and death, or contrasted with the flesh of Tadzio and his pedestrian Fuer Elise. The tensions written into the music at the time of composition now appear to be those of loneliness and latent homosexuality rather than those of a rarefied, aesthetic Sehnsucht.

Against the recondite infusion of aural and visual which tends to support Aschenbach's authorship of the Adagietto, Visconti introduces an element which tends strongly to deny this authorship, namely the three flashback scenes between Aschenbach and Alfried. Aschenbach's assumption therein of the role of a disciplined, objective and restrained classical composer together with Alfried's vehement criticism of such a role is in direct contradiction with Aschenbach's basic characterization and style of music. It appears to be an attempt to restore a modicum of ambiguity, of balance. To this end the means employed are very successful, but heavy-handed, and not in keeping with Visconti's usual subtlety. The explanation
for the contradiction offered by the flashback dialogue is indicated in an interview by Visconti himself: "Alfried è soltanto una sorta di 'alter ego' di cattiva — o buona — coscienza del protagonista, che lo accompagna durante tutta la crisi, come una sorta di incubica proiezione di se stesso." It is in terms of a nightmare or dream that the three flashback dialogues between Aschenbach and Alfried are to be understood. On this level they function as visualised fantasy. A romantic composer of so susceptible and sensitive a character as to be described as "a prissy, incompetent little neurotic, physically infirm and morally timid," seeks compensation for his feelings of failure and insecurity by imagining himself to be the exact opposite of what he is in reality. Alfried is the voice of moderation rejecting the extreme solution Aschenbach fantasizes for his aesthetic and personal problems; classical discipline and restraint will hopefully counter undesirable sexual inclinations and the effete lyricism of his music. Alfried represents everything that Aschenbach has chosen not to be. He is a constant reminder to Aschenbach of the vulnerability of his situation.

The position of Alfried bears a slight resemblance to that of Mahler's favourite pupil and close friend, Schoenberg. Though Visconti has termed any identification of Alfried with Schoenberg "una illazione senza troppo fondamento," there is a distinctly Schoenberghian aura about Alfried, but an aura derived
Although his remarks do not indicate any definite view of music, his criticism of Aschenbach's idealised classicism and the failure of Aschenbach's actual romanticism seem to indicate his espousal of a new style of music freed from strained traditional modes of expression; a style perhaps exemplified in a book published the same year as that chosen by Visconti for the year of his film (1911), Schoenberg's Harmonielehre; a style perhaps that, by proposing answers to Adrian Leverkuehn's questions, reveals a knowledge of the situation of music to which Aschenbach is unable to attain: "Warum müssen fast alle Dinge mir als ihre eigene Parodie erscheinen? Warum muss es mir vorkommen, als ob fast alle, nein, alle Mittel und Konvenienzen der Kunst heute nur noch zur Parodie taugen?"  

Whereas in the case of the Adagietto not being music by Aschenbach the flashbacks function as pure reminiscence, here, when viewed as actually being his, they function as fanciful daydreams, as projections of a solution to the dilemma of early twentieth century music. In both cases, however, the lack of an imitative quality forestalls the creation of parody; the Adagietto cannot parody Aschenbach's style of music because it is either too unlike his own type of music, or because it actually is his music. The irony that is present in the film draws heavily on the ambiguity of the author-
ship of the Adagietto and on the tense, equivocal nature of the piece itself for its effect. Visconti's changing Aschenbach into a musician is at the root of this multileveled structure of ambiguity and irony. It is the basis upon which all the other additions to and subtractions from the novella are made.
REFERENCES

1. Micciche, L. Morte a Venezia. p. 77
3. Micciche, L. op. cit. p. 114
4. Ibid. p. 185
6. Ibid. p. 62
7. Mann, T. Briefe 1889-1936. p. 185
8. Ibid. p. 88
10. Mann, T. Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus. p. 293
   (quoted by Micciche, L. op. cit. p. 79)
12. Micciche, L. op. cit. p. 83
13. Ibid. p. 116
14. Ibid. p. 258
15. Mann, T. Briefe 1889-1936. p. 176
16. Ibid. p. 177
17. Ibid. p. 162
18. Mann, T. Gesammelte Werke: Band 12, Betrachtungen eines
   Unpolitischen. p. 105
   (quoted by Nicklas, H. Der Tod in Venedig. p. 120)
19. Mann, T. Briefe 1889-1936. p. 162
REFERENCES

21. Nicklas, H. Der Tod in Venedig. p. 120
22. Ibid. p. 124
23. Ibid. p. 122

24. It might be mentioned at this point that, viewed in terms of the crisis of the novel of c. 1910, Mann's use of parody can also be seen as an interesting experiment in style, seeking alternatives to ineffectual, traditional modes of narrative prose.

25. Ferguson, D. Masterworks of the Orchestral Repertoire. p. 354
26. Simpson, R. The Symphony. volume 2, p. 32
28. Ibid. p. 175
29. Ferguson, D. op. cit. p. 348
30. Bekker, P. op. cit. p. 193
31. Ferguson, D. op. cit. p. 351-52
32. Bekker, P. op. cit. p. 193
33. Simpson, R. op. cit. p. 42
34. Bekker, P. op. cit. p. 200
35. Ibid. p. 197
36. Mann, T. Der Tod in Venedig. p. 455
37. Miccichè, L. op. cit. p. 115
38. Ibid. p. 121
40. Miccichè, L. op. cit. p. 89
REFERENCES

41. Ibid. p. 121

42. Ibid. p. 89

43. Mann, T. *Doktor Faustus*. p. 180
The result of Visconti's second major adaptive operation on the text of Der Tod in Venedig is the "addition" to the story of some ten flashbacks. Not all ten are flashbacks proper, but all break the narration of the main story-line, and eight are distinctly references to past events. They have several functions. They serve to narrate a second story that has taken place before Aschenbach's arrival in Venice; by their positioning through the montage process some of them serve as an ironic commentary on the events presently taking place; and most important they provide the film with ideational content and the film's protagonist with a past. In chronological order the flashbacks are as follows:

i) Aschenbach's illness

ii) the hourglass

iii) the first Aschenbach/Alfried dialogue

iv) the second Aschenbach/Alfried dialogue

v) family happiness

vi) Esmeralda

vii) warning Tadzio's mother

viii) family mourning

ix) the fiasco scene

x) Tadzio's face

The flashbacks provide ready access to the body of the film. They can be conveniently subdivided for study into four groups: three minor flashbacks based largely on Der Tod in Venedig, four
personal flashbacks, two ideational ones, and one final flashback uniting both personal and ideational considerations.

Two of the ten are based exclusively on Der Tod in Venedig: the seventh and tenth. The scene in which Aschenbach considers warning the "perlengeschmueckte Frau" is inserted, understandably, in his conversation with the travel agent, not after it as is the case in the novella. The shot of Tadzio's face, though not specifically in the novella yet faithful to its spirit, implicit in the text, follows immediately on the nightmare/fiasco scene, and precedes the last day. As depicted cinematically the seventh flashback is basically melodramatic. Miccichiè points out very astutely that whereas Mann's Aschenbach thinks the scene, Visconti's imagines it.¹ A visualisation of Mann's words gives the scene a greater reality, and although it still gives expression to a remnant of reason and self-control in Aschenbach, the film scene is necessarily more sentimental than reflective. Aschenbach takes leave of the travel agent immediately after the flashback sequence is over, and appears in the following scene in both novella and film with the words "Ich werde schweigen"/"Bisogna tacere". Both flashbacks seven and ten convey a light irony by contrasting with the contexts in which they occur; the rational, upright Aschenbach is contrasted with the harried possessor of a deadly secret, and the soft apparition of Tadzio's face is contrasted with the "nightmare" and Tadzio's own
now strongly diabolical character.

A third flashback of minor importance is that of the hourglass. It is an effective single shot following immediately on flashback number one and preceding a scene in which Aschenbach is viewed fastidiously dressing for dinner, kissing portraits of his wife and daughter, and then going down to join the throng of guests in the hotel lobby. The shot is inspired by references to hourglasses in both Der Tod in Venedig and Doktor Faustus. It is a quiet, reflective memento mori in keeping with the nature of the preceding scene and offering a sharp contrast to the scenes of life, of careful attention to life's details, and of interpersonal relations which follow.

Flashbacks one, five, six, and eight serve to provide personal background on Aschenbach. They are all banal, emotional additions, private and highly personal. As such they contrast with the ideational content of the remaining three flashbacks, which represent Aschenbach in a more serious and intellectual dimension.

Aschenbach recalls the subject of the film's first flashback — the heart condition which will eventually cause his death — while standing on the balcony of the Hotel des Bains and taking in the view of beach, sea and sky; the calm, reassuring sight of Venice reminds him of the reason for his visit. This first flashback acts as replacement for the opening Munich scene of the novella, which scene was actually filmed by Visconti, to be inserted as a flashback during the crossing from Pola to Venice, but then dropped ostensibly "perché frammentava il racconto fin dall'inizio. Al tempo stesso il
Although there is some mention later -- "Io voglio ritrovare il mio equilibrio." of personal and artistic reasons for travelling to Venice, the emphasis is on those reasons mentioned by the doctor -- "Avrebbe bisogna di una lunga vacanza. Un periodo di riposo assoluto." The reasons implicit in the novella for Aschenbach's journey are largely dispensed with; the crisis of the will, the supernatural incitement, the increasing age or physiological weakening that goes hand in hand with an increased susceptibility to life, to sensuality, i.e. the moral weakening -- all these inner states are replaced by the action of the first flashback. In keeping with its nature film is able to depict this physical reality of illness much more strikingly than the spiritual states. Visconti's presentation of this reductive process natural to films is lent a slightly melodramatic air by the depiction of the hovering friends, Aschenbach's pinched and nervous face, and Alfried's touching solicitude.

Flashbacks five and eight revolve around the Aschenbach family. The fifth -- the scene of family happiness -- is recalled by Aschenbach as he sits on the beach watching the Polish family. A shot of Tadzio's mother precedes the appearance of Aschenbach's wife with their little daughter at the beginning of the sequence, and the scene ends with a fade-out and the appearance of Tadzio. Paternal feelings for Tadzio are implied on Aschenbach's part. The eighth -- the scene of family mourning -- follows Aschenbach's decision to keep silent about the plague, the "Bisogna tacere"
scene, and precedes his first visit to the barber -- the death that
his silence may cause Tadzio recalling the death of his own daughter.
Like the fifth flashback, the eighth also contrasts sharply with
the Venetian setting by means of its luxuriant vegetation, and rich,
dark colouration. Like the fifth and first, it is also traceable
back to Mahler's biography. The cardiac trouble, the happy family
scene in front of the alpine chalet, and the episode of the little
girl's funeral all relate back to events in Mahler's own life. The
three are part of the film's network of more or less vague Mahler
allusions.

The final flashback providing Aschenbach with personal back­
ground is the film's sixth, the Esmeralda scene. It is inspired
by Doktor Faustus. The scene follows on Tadzio's playing of Fuer
Elise on the piano and it is introduced by the prostitute playing
the same tune. It precedes a scene in which Aschenbach and Tadzio
meet in the hotel garden and Aschenbach avows his passion ("... io
ti amo"). Although the naming of the steamer that brings Aschenbach
to Venice "Esmeralda", and the blatant transitional device of Fuer
Elise are clumsy, the tight filiation of scenes provided by the
latter is important for establishing a relation between Tadzio and
Esmeralda. The purpose of this identification of Tadzio and
prostitute is explained by Visconti himself:

Mi premeva, infatti, unificare ed al tempo stesso
soppiare l'elemento della "contaminazione" e
dell'attrazione dei sensi e quello della purezza
infantile. D'altronde la ragazza del bordello
ricorda un po' Tadzio perché ha un volto puro
di bambina, oltre a ricordare il Doctor Faustus,
almeno per chi l'abbia letto, e, più precisamente, l'allusione alla biografia di Nietzsche che il Faustus conteneva. Insomma Aschenbach, nel collegare la presenza di Tadzio al ricordo della prostituta, cioè ad una "contaminazione" avuta anni addietro, coglie pienamente l'aspetto più ambigamente "peccaminoso" del proprio atteggiamento verso Tadzio. Egli cioè è preda, come anni addietro con Esmeralda, è preda ancora una volta di un cedimento. Tadzio quindi riassume quella che è stata una delle polarità della vita di Aschenbach, una polarità che rappresentando la vita -- in alternativa ed antitesi all'universo rigidamente intellettuale, a quella "vita sublimata" in cui Aschenbach è rinchiuso -- si conclude con la morte. Esmeralda e Tadzio non rappresentano soltanto la vita ma quella sua dimensione specifica, conturbante e contaminatrice, che è la Bellezza.°

In keeping with Visconti's diachronic reading of Mann the inclusion of references to Doktor Faustus seems very appropriate. Yet the figure of Esmeralda is drained of the importance Mann ascribes to it, little more than the name remaining. She certainly does not warn Aschenbach about a syphilitic condition -- a point stressed by Mann 7 -- and unlike the novel there is not even a question here of syphilis or consummation. Visconti's intentions notwithstanding, if she "recalls" anything it is the boat of scene one. The bordello sequence as a whole adds little by trying to reassert the fact that Aschenbach is aware of the ambiguous nature of his relation to Tadzio, or that Tadzio represents a sensual antithesis to Aschenbach; these things seem clear enough without the bordello sequence. This sixth flashback may well fit Visconti's melodramatic schema and find its justification in a context of melodrama. In the larger cinematic context in which Visconti hopes to express something of Der Tod in Venedig, however, it is heavy-handed and pretentious.
Flashbacks three and four are both presented in the form of a dialogue between Aschenbach and his protégé/friend Alfried. They constitute the bulk of the film's ideational content. Number three is first projected only on the sound track over Aschenbach at dinner watching Tadzio. It is followed by the discussion on the weather with the hotel manager. It is the sight of Tadzio which reminds Aschenbach of Alfried's words and initiates the latter's heated tirade. Number four follows the incident in the elevator and Aschenbach's return to his room, where he starts packing, and precedes his announcement to the manager of his departure the following day. The dialogue of both flashbacks is perhaps drawn from *Doktor Faustus* more than from other Mann works, but the material seems to suggest a more general purview of Mann's main themes and aesthetic preoccupations as they are commonly understood. These two flashbacks are given the role of expressing the ideas and profound insights on art and life contained in *Der Tod in Venedig*. The discussion is rather one-sided, Alfried doing most of the talking. He criticizes Aschenbach severely, specifically refuting the latter's belief in artistic fate ("la fatica di artista"), his belief in the artist as exemplar and in art as the most elevated means of acquiring knowledge, and his belief in the need for complete control of one's senses in order to acquire the "sagezza ... verità ... dignità umana" which he identifies with beauty. Alfried's lines are interlarded with platitudes of the nature of "il male è una necessità ... è ... l'alimento stesso ... del genio" [sic], and "il genio è ... una punizione di Dio". His reproaches succeed in all but drowning
out Aschenbach's hint of some deep-seated anxiety -- "Io sono contaminato".\textsuperscript{11} His lines succeed in rendering Mann's ideas a little bathetic, being pretentious, unintelligible shouting rather than a few discerning points that could contribute to our understanding of either Aschenbach, or the dilemma of the artist, or the dilemma of the bourgeoisie. Visconti has here failed to reduce the wealth and variety of intellectual content of the novella to a workable core. The borrowings from \textit{Doktor Faustus} in the Esmeralda scene and in flashbacks three and four only add an eclectic note where condensation and restraint are called for:

\begin{quote}
Might one not assume that a film-maker should be limited in his concern to finding the visual idiom that corresponds to the written idiom of the author? If there is a "message", shouldn't that too be translated first into images (even if they sustain a spoken text)? If the articulation of those ideas requires borrowing from more than the work which is being transposed, must one not suppose undue attention to what is not properly cinematic (ideas), or that the images meant to effect the original translation were deficient?\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Grossvogel's penetrating questions seem to strike home. One has the impression that Visconti has over-reached himself in taking a diachronic approach to Mann. His attempt at comprehensiveness as exhibited in the two ideational flashbacks is a poor substitute for one or two specific points that might exteriorise part of the life which is going on in Aschenbach's head. The ideational content of flashbacks three and four is unable to show Aschenbach in a more positive, universalized light. Visconti's overall characterization evinces far less sympathy for Aschenbach than does Mann's.
The ninth flashback is the single most important scene in the film. It is the point towards which tend both the Venetian and the flashback story lines, the point where "l'uomo e l'artista toccano il fondo, insieme." Broadly speaking it is equivalent to the end of Mann's fifth chapter. It is followed almost immediately by the epilogue of the last day. The scene follows that scene which is a culminating point for Mann and for Visconti's Venetian story, the collapse at the well. Thus a scene that is one of humiliation and ostracism follows, or is recalled as a result of, Aschenbach's collapse. At the end of the flashback the final lines are spoken over Aschenbach's awakening from a dream; the entire scene thus partakes of nightmare as well as of pure memory. This fiasco scene was originally to be followed by the filming of Mann's nightmare/orgy scene. However, Visconti later decided not to film it, both because he felt that in filming such a bacchanal "finivo o nel più deteriore Fellini o, peggio, nel miglior Fulci," and also because it conflicted with his desire to "mantenermi nell'ambito di ... pur ambigua delicatesza." Instead he introduced a nightmarish element into the fiasco scene and inserted the brief tenth flashback apparition of Tadzio's face between Aschenbach's awakening and Alfried's fading angry words on the one hand, and the epilogue on the other. He explains his decision not to film the nightmare/orgy scene in the following terms:
Ma poi ho preferito rinunciare, ritenendo che nel film si sarebbero venute a creare una frattura ed una caduta di gusto e di tono, ed ho preferito sostituire l'incubo -- che nel libro corrisponde al massimo momento di depressione e prelude alla morte -- con il "fiasco" concertistico che anche esso nel film, corrisponde al massimo momento depressivo, alla disperazione prima della fine. 

In view of the fact that the script called for the scene to be shot in a Munich club, Blow Up, in a 1970's decor complete with electronic music and psychedelic lighting, Visconti's reservations about actually filming it are quite understandable.

On the flashback level the fiasco scene sums up both the personal and ideational flashbacks that have gone before. The four personal flashbacks which respectively depicted illness, happiness, sadness, and sexual susceptibility, culminate here in Aschenbach's personal, social and artistic failure. The content of the two ideational flashbacks here continues to be paroxysmally expanded upon by Alfried. On the level of the story the fiasco scene, coming as it does immediately after Aschenbach's collapse at the well, emphasizes the totality of his defeat by adding the weight of its description of social and artistic failure to the physical and mental failure that is gathered in the scene of his collapse. Structurally the collapse/fiasco scenes are the climax of the film much the way the nightmare/collapse scenes are the climax of the novella. The fiasco scene, however, bears the great responsibility placed upon it uneasily, being a
relatively flat and uninspired scene not all comparable to Mann's nightmare/orgy. The pursuant shot of Tadzio's face, (flashback number ten), occupying a position similar to that of the Socrates/Phaedrus dialogue, provides an ironic comment on the film by replacing the intellectuality of the philosophical discourse with a picture of the fleshy, sexual reality which, by design or not, is the "senso maggiore" of Visconti's cinematic adaptation.

All Visconti's flashback additions are basically melodramatic; they are striking additions of an extreme and emotionally tense nature. Nothing could be more foreign to Mann, more characteristic of Visconti. The dead child, alienated protégé, hostile audience, kindly whore --- all constitute the addition of the inessential as far as Der Tod in Venedig is concerned. But they are essential to Morte a Venezia, i.e. to the Viscontian interpretation of Der Tod in Venedig which begins by modelling Gustav von Aschenbach on the romantic composer Gustav Mahler.

Changing Aschenbach into a musician necessitates further changes in his character; Visconti's hero is not simply Mann's writer pursuing a different career. The emphasis in Visconti's characterization of Aschenbach is on the reality of his senescence, fatigue and sexual desire. The physical, so readily expressible cinematically, is dominant to the point of virtual exclusion of the abstract or intellectual considerations which predominate in Mann. Through the parodistic device of using Aschenbach's style Mann succeeds in blotting out Aschenbach the man and revealing only Aschenbach the
artist; the man is glimpsed only through his work. Thus the ideological Aschenbach who is so prominent in the telling of his own story, and the human Aschenbach who has all but effaced himself in the name of art can be expressed simultaneously. Visconti, however, separates artist and Mensch. In keeping with Aschenbach's characterization as a romantic artist he must be shown in a highly personal, egocentric dimension. Thus Visconti gives the human Aschenbach much more attention, much more forcefulness than the artist Aschenbach. Aschenbach is brought down from the rarefied aesthetic heights in which he moves at the beginning of Der Tod in Venedig. In Morte a Venezia he is no longer able to distance himself through art. He is denied the device Mann makes use of in his chapter two, where Aschenbach writes his own biography, and where the more he says about himself the better one understands him yet the more unreachable he becomes. In Morte a Venezia Aschenbach is humanized and brought closer to us. The classical musician of Alfréd's criticism, whom Visconti has relegated to the three ideational flashbacks, is overpowerd by the romantic and human Aschenbach who is in the foreground throughout the entire film.

In Der Tod in Venedig the situation is quite different. Mann presents his hero at the height of his powers and fame -- at least in the eyes of the world. Recently ennobled on the occasion of his
fiftieth birthday, Aschenbach enjoys the honour of a grateful
public, and enjoys, too, the dubious distinction of having his
works anthologized in school texts. He is the spokesman of his age:

Gustav Aschenbach war der Dichter all derer,
die am Rande der Erschoepfung arbeiten, der
Ueberbuerdeten, schon Aufgeriebenen, sich
noch Aufrechthalmenden, all dieser Moralisten
der Leistung, die schmaechtig von Wuchs und
sproede von Mitteln, durch Willensverzueckung
und kluge Verwaltung sich wenigstens eine
Zeitlang die Wirkungen der Groesse abgewinnen. 17

It is only beneath this facade of self-control and moral rectitude
that Aschenbach's life in art shows signs of strain. With the
years he has found it increasingly difficult to satisfy the demands
of his exacting Meisterschaft -- "waehrend die Nation sie ehrte,
er ward ihrer nicht froh." 18 He worries lest someone suspect his
growing fatigue "die das Produkt auf keine Weise, durch kein
Anzeichen des Versagens und der Lassheit verraten durfte." 19 He
has reached an impasse; his strength eroded by "die Skrupel der
Unlust, die sich als eine durch nichts mehr zu befriedigende
Ungenügsamkeit darstellte." 20

But the facade Aschenbach has built up is not to be understood
in negative terms only. It is quite obviously a faulty and unwork-
able solution to the problems besetting an artist. But Aschenbach
chose the cult of form with "tiefen Entschlusse", cultivated the
"Wunder der wiedergeborenen Unbefangenheit" consciously. His art
was initially the product of an effort to find a means of artistic
expression possible in an age that had questioned away the old values and standards. In this respect his efforts were those of Mann; only his solutions were different. Aschenbach embodies a possible solution to the dilemma of art, a solution perhaps cathartic for Mann, but a solution rejected. Aschenbach grows spiritually during the course of his stay in Venice in the sense that he comes to realize the true nature of art. Like so many of the important formal and ideational considerations of Der Tod in Venedig, this culmination of Aschenbach's artistic development reaches its apogee in the second address to Phaedrus, the scene Mann himself described as "den Kern des Ganzen."²¹

Der Tod in Venedig is structured in the form of a five act tragedy with epilogue. Act one opens in medias res with the relation of the meeting with the mysterious stranger. Act two goes back to fill in important biographical details while act three moves the action forward to the point of irreversability, ending on Aschenbach's "bereitwillig willkommen heissende, gelassen aufnehmende Gebaerde"²² of resignation — the now unclenched fist. Act four brings the play to a climax with Aschenbach's closing words "Ich liebe dich", and act five brings the whole to a close, terminating in the Socrates/Aschenbach — Phaedrus/Tadzio dialogue. The epilogue is a foregone conclusion narrating the events of Aschenbach's last day; the play proper has concluded with the philosophic discourse. Aschenbach's nightmare/orgy and collapse at the well sustain the climax of the end of act four, but the final note
is one of calmness -- "the tone is mild, gentle and ironic."\textsuperscript{23} The second address to Phaedrus serves as a denouement for the five acts of frustration and despair that have gone before. It brings the classical Greek element of the story into the foreground to project a resolution reconciling both the Apollonian and Dionysian forces which have provided the story with its basic conflict. The downward movement which is characteristic of the story, i.e. Aschenbach's descent into that abyss with which he had earlier renounced all sympathy, and the movement of rapprochement, i.e. the gradual and inexorable loss of distance, the weakening of the will to endure ("durchhalten"), the will to preserve dignity and morality, both these movements which bring Aschenbach down to a more human level, or, more precisely, to a level more properly that of the artist, are complemented in the address to Phaedrus. These movements are indicative of the overall direction of the story, one away from Apollonian individuality, self-control and proportion towards Dionysian lawlessness, atavism and collective loss of self.

Mann employs myth as a formal, controlling and ordering device during the course of the novella. It gives meaning to the events that transpire in Venice. Mann's use of myth is a parody of the traditional mythic pattern of the hero setting out on a quest, being initiated into the world, undergoing a series of tests, receiving magical help and returning home with a "transcendental message"\textsuperscript{24} -- a pattern approximating that of Bildungsroman and Maerchen. But the end of this search for knowledge is not the
orgiastic, Nietzschean paean of the Dionysian forces which have gradually gained control of Aschenbach and of Venice, but a typical Mann scene of calm, philosophic rationalization between an old man and a youth to whom he is quite consciously sexually attracted. In relating the problem of Eros and poetry, "the speaker has somehow managed to detach himself from the tumultuous passions which he is discussing, ... the erotic drive [is] partially transmuted into the energy for a highly civilized activity which perpetuates and improves life." Here there is no question of a solution to the dilemmas of mind-body, thought-feeling, society-individual, or any of the other polarities inherent in life, but rather a statement that is simply one of awareness, of acceptance of the burden of knowledge. Neither Mann nor the speaker is capable of finding a solution. At this point Mann is aware that he too is "der Dichter all derer, die am Rande der Erschoepfung arbeiten," the spokesman of a decadent bourgeois culture, an artist seeking to express himself in that bourgeois novelistic tradition which has become as effete as the class that once gave it its strength and raison d'etre. He is conscious of an end, of a pressing need to find values in a world gradually become bereft of values. The bourgeois social structure, its beliefs, mores and wants, is found to be hollow, untoward and static, and as we are reminded: "There is no continuity in stasis. A tradition,
like a bicycle, is stable only when moving." 26 Although no alternative is readily perceivable — "all solutions and positions are seen to dissolve in the constant movement of their own dialectic" 27 — by the evocation of the figure of Socrates at the end of the novella, "Mann point[s] the way to the Platonic synthesis of eros, reason, and society." 28

Beyond the formal and ideational constituents of the Kern lies perhaps its most striking feature; the reintegration of personal and social aims brought about by Aschenbach's growth to self-realization. The downward movement which overwhelms the film is countered in the novella by a positive, perhaps pathological heightening of perception on the part of the hero. He who had yielded to the "scharfen und bitteren Reiz der Erkenntnis", 29 who had succeeded when still young "das Wissen zu leugnen, es abzulehnen, erhobenen Hauptes darüber hinwegzugehen, sofern es den Willen, die Tat, das Gefühl und selbst die Leidenschaft im geringsten zu laehmen, zu entmutigen, zu entwuerdigen geeignet ist", 30 has now come full circle. His depravity and moral regression are accompanied by self-awareness. As he mouths the speech to Phaedrus/Tadzio he comes to assume the burden of Tonio Kroeger's Erkenntnissekel, and becomes conscious of the error of his life-denying preoccupation with form and detachment:

denn die Erkenntnis, Phaidros, hat keine Wuerde und Strenge; die ist wissend, verstehend, verzeichend, ohne Haltung und Form; sie hat Sympathie mit dem Abgrund, sie ist der Abgrund. 31
Aschenbach has matured in the course of his degradation, lending the story an ambiguously positive feature entirely lacking in the film adaptation. Mann has written enough of himself into Aschenbach to want to suggest that his hero's vision of Elysium in chapter four and the gesture of "der bleiche und liebliche Psychagog" in the final paragraph hold out a promise of transcendental realisation in the face of a mood of ironic detachment, despair and self-mockery.

It is in the Kern that Aschenbach is shown in the most positive light; Mann's characterization is sympathetic. He is aware of the tragic dimension of Aschenbach's fall and what it implies for his epoch. He both admires Aschenbach and holds him suspect. Whereas Visconti changes Aschenbach's career, making him a composer, i.e. one who "cannot have the social role as guardian of the morality of his class that Aschenbach the philosophical novelist could enjoy", and proceeds to register readily filmic externals, Mann introduces a wider social and historical horizon, and by representing the story's action as going on in Aschenbach's head, purveys a mood heavily intellectual and psychological, i.e. "irrapresentabile".

It is precisely this philosophic and subjective dimension which the film medium is so hard put to express adequately. The objectification of inner states and processes is necessary if the film's images are to express more than a simple one for one, denotative, indexical significance, and are to attain to a connotative, symbolic
significance. It is extremely difficult to give film form to abstractions and intangibles, to be representational through a medium which is largely presentational. The areas in which film excels such as immediacy, movement, and the ready ability to create illusion, are of relatively little advantage in expressing a complex, intellectual text like Der Tod in Venedig. An attempt to adapt Mann's novella to the screen assumes the acceptance and brilliant use of those limits inherent and indispensable in film.

Certain details of Der Tod in Venedig are eminently cinematic. By and large they tend to be minor surface features of the core narrative or the story's ambience. The novella is full of brilliant images, but images inseparable from the language in which they are couched, the belletristic language of Aschenbach. In transliterating events and descriptions from Der Tod in Venedig into Morte a Venezia, Visconti's primary concern is to get meaning, significance from the objects and spaces of each frame, a significance determined by his reading of Der Tod in Venedig and his need to select the elements essential for a visualisation of that reading.

Two sequences of events in the novella which are given much greater emphasis in the film are those dealing with Aschenbach's trailing Tadzio through Venice, and those in which Aschenbach and Tadzio exchange glances. Quantitatively the two journeys through the Venetian labyrinth in pursuit of Tadzio take up a great deal more time in the film than is indicated in the novella. Like Visconti's pans across the guests in the hotel lobby or on the Lido, they are
repeated and extended to the point of tediousness. Moreover, it is never clearly established why the governess is leading her charges through the infected city. However inexplicable, their tour is handled with such a feeling for Venice and its grimy, plague-ridden, romantic, architecturally correct and exemplary canals, bridges and byways, that one almost has the impression that Visconti is interested only in photographing Venice, and not in the man who is dying in Venice. If the continual grimaces and pained expressions of Aschenbach become virtually devoid of meaning, at least his journeys through Venice manage to capture some of the ambiguous, diseased beauty of the fallen Queen of the Seas. No attempt is made, however, to specifically relate this ambiguity to him who most partakes of it, Tadzio.

The manner of presentation of the scenes in which Aschenbach and Tadzio exchange glances is indicative of Visconti's handling of scenes offering sexual possibilities. He has maintained that quantitatively the number of glances exchanged between Aschenbach and Tadzio is the same in the film as in the novella. The problem, however, is not one of quantity, of faithfulness to the letter of the text, but one of quality, of faithfulness to the idea behind the inclusion of the glances in the novella. The "glance" exchanged between two characters in a book is not the "glance" exchanged on the screen. This problem of transliteration is best isolated by...
Miccichè: Una cosa è leggere "aveva osato gettare uno sguardo verso Tadzio e aveva visto il bello ricambiargli lo sguardo con uguale serietà", dove oltre a tutto quell'aveva visto (e, almeno nella traduzione, quella particella pronominale in coda al verbo ricambiare) accentua la soggettività del tutto. Un'altra è invece vedere in primi piani e controcampi i due sguardi che concretamente si incrociano. Nel primo caso il lettore ha evidentemente l'arbitrio totale della propria immaginazione e quello invece assai minore della propria interpretazione; nel secondo egli ha indubbiamente un maggior arbitrio interpretativo, ma nessun arbitrio immaginativo, poiché gli sguardi sono lì, e sono quelli, ed hanno il rilievo che dà loro l'immagine, essendo però divenuti pesantemente oggettivi. Discorso anche questo che applica al caso particolare un dato generale delle immagini filmiche le quali, proprio per il loro univoco presentarsi come una oggettivazione dell'immaginario, per essere quelle e non altre, escludono l'ambiguità della pagina scritta (nel cinema l'"ambiguità poetica" ha componenti di tutt'altra natura) e quando con essa abbiano un rapporto, lo hanno di interpretazione e mai di riproduzione.34

Visconti is unable to give his exchanges of glances anything but a sexual quality. Initially they express the bewilderment of Aschenbach satisfactorily; they quickly degenerate into type-casting Aschenbach as a lecher, Tadzio as a mere flirt. In a cinematic adaptation that has taken great liberties with its texte de base, this insistence on faithfulness seems almost out of place. It is an interesting comment on Visconti's reading of Der Tod in Venedig that he has taken Mann's mute words of love and the repressed desire they conceal, i.e. scenes of great potential eroticism, and emphasized them out of all due proportion, thereby adding to an interpretation of the novella that is already highly sex-oriented. Visconti is always very mindful
of the sexual potential of Mann's story, the most noteworthy exception to this predilection being his omission of Mann's most overtly erotic scene, the nightmare/orgy.

The sequence in which these glances of erotic complicity are misused in the worst possible way is the provocation scene, that one in which Tadzio swings around on the pole under the boardwalk canopy in the face of Aschenbach. The scene is comparable to that one in the novella in which Aschenbach approaches Tadzio from behind and attempts to speak to him, "leichte, heitere, Bekanntschaft zu machen". Like the earlier attempt to flee Venice this scene is also a case of opportunity missed. If Aschenbach had been able to break that silence which has always been the lot of the "Einsam-Stummen," Mann implies that he might have been able to put his relation to Tadzio on a more natural footing: "Dieser Schritt, den zu tun er versäumte, er hätte sehr möglicherweise zum Guten, Leichten und Frohen, zu heilsamer Erneuerung geführt." But Aschenbach keeps silent.

The moment to speak, to initiate some sort of communication between his world of Apollonian mind and Tadzio's world of Dionysian body, to bring this relationship with Tadzio within the paternalistic pale hinted at by Mann ("Einen Sohn hatte er nie besessen"), the ideal moment for this action is the meeting on the hotel boardwalk. The scene's importance rests in Aschenbach's inability or unwillingness to act.

The reticence of Mann's Aschenbach is a reflection of a more
encompassing conspiracy of silence. It is part of the insidious disintegration of language, Aschenbach's artistic medium and means of controlling and ordering reality, which gains momentum as the story progresses. Aschenbach's silence and isolation are only underlined by the indistinct, deceptive, and incomprehensible sounds that fill Venice: the muttering of the gondolier; the polyglot babble of voices at the hotel; the balladier's "dreister Schlager in unverstaendlichem Dialekt" which renounces words and musical accompaniment and deteriorates into mere rhythmical laughter and gesture; the lies of the hotel manager; the disappearance of the German language newspapers from the hotel lobby and of the German language per se from Venice -- "als ob die deutsche Sprache um ihn her versiege und verstumme"; the "Schwätzer" of a barber; and of course the "weich verschwommen[e] Sprache" of Tadzio -- "Aschenbach verstand nicht ein Wort von dem, was er sagte, und mochte es das Alltaeglichste sein, es war verschwommener Wohllaut in seinem Ohr. So erhob Fremdheit des Knaben Rede zur Musik." Aschenbach holds his silence to the point where, having collapsed at the well, i.e. immediately before the speech to Phaedrus, he is virtually unable to speak -- "und seine schlaffen Lippen, kosmetisch aufgehoehlt, bildeten einzelne Worte aus von dem, was sein halb schlummerndes Hirn an seltsamer Traumlogik hervorbrachte."

The scene of confrontation on the boardwalk offers Aschenbach the opportunity for self-awareness, for putting into words a situation over which he is rapidly losing control. By naming it he can gain
some control over it and over himself: "All dialogue is a proffer of mutual cognisance and a strategic re-definition of self."\textsuperscript{42} By speaking to Tadzio Aschenbach might recognize him as merely a frail Polish boy vacationing in Venice. He might then be able to reaffirm his own secure, irreproachable position, and be able to break, in turn, the conspiracy of silence. Visconti's transcription strips the scene of significance by moving the unwitting Tadzio into the foreground in his role as antagonist. The scene serves only to present Tadzio as an annoying little tease, a facet of his character which Visconti has already made clear enough. It is certainly in keeping with the film's sexual dimension, but it fails to say anything new or to reach below the surface. It might as well have been omitted.

A sequence of scenes faithfully transposed from the novella is that one in which Aschenbach departs for and returns from the train station in chapter three. The outward events are identical in novella and film: Aschenbach's recalcitrance at being rushed over breakfast, the tacit farewell to Tadzio, the misdirected trunk at the station — all are included in the film. The only addition is that of the old man who collapses at the railroad station, the first indication of the plague that will come to sweep the city. Here Visconti gets excellent results from his hotel manager, who seems to condense in his characterization that obsequious and "beutelschneiderische Geschäftsgeist der gesunkenen Koenigin"\textsuperscript{43} which is a part of the decadent environment Mann tries to evoke. Visconti cleverly brings forward and alters the character of Mann's
hotel manager,

facendone in un certo senso il contrario del direttore d'albergo che descrive Mann che è piccoletto e pieno di falsa dignità. A me serviva invece un personaggio un po' untuoso, che desse la sensazione di falsità ed ambiguità: un tipico direttore d'albergo all'italiana, che ricorda un po' anche il direttore dell'Hotel di Baalbeck di Marcel. Per me, dal vecchio della nave al gondoliere, al direttore dell' albergo sono tutti dei piccoli diavoli che concorrono a determinare la sorte di Aschenbach e lo conducono là dove egli deve andare a trovare quell'angelo della morte che lo condurrà al compimento del suo destino.44

This "little devil" is an exemplary cinematic resume of various individual details of the novella.

But where the scenes of departure and return are weak is with regard to the underlying question of motivation. Just as the plague which first appears in Venice in the stultifying, oppressive atmosphere must needs be exteriorised in the film in the person of the old man who collapses at the train station, so the reason for Aschenbach's departure, which is given in terms of an illness induced by the weather, must also be exteriorised in some manner. Visconti chooses to express the reason for Aschenbach's departure in the person of Tadzio, "rendendo in fondo parzialmente esplicito ciò che nella novella era parzialmente implicito. Insomma la pagina scritta permette dilatazioni che la pagina cinematografica non consente. Ed io [Visconti] ho dovuto stringere le emozioni, accumularle maggiormente, aggregarle di più l'una all'altra."45

This choice is made especially explicit by the scene which precedes
Aschenbach's frantic packing, the meeting in the elevator. Where Mann's Aschenbach notices Tadzio's frailty and imperfect teeth, Visconti's only manages to exchange another glance with his fair tempter. It is for Tadzio's sake alone that he tries to leave Venice, that he first takes the boat across the lagoon as the Adagietto intones music of arch-romantic Sehnsucht, and then returns back across the lagoon while it sounds again in triumph. Despite the reasons for departure which he gives the hotel manager -- unforeseen circumstances in Munich, the bad weather -- one knows his actions have a homoerotic determinant. This is quite the opposite of the situation in Mann, where the part Tadzio plays in Aschenbach's flight -- [Aschenbach] "erkannte, dass ihm um Tadzio's willen der Abschied so schwer geworden war"46 -- is brought to both Aschenbach's and the reader's attention only when Aschenbach is safely ensconced back in his hotel room. By describing the scene in which Aschenbach walks through Venice and stops to rest at that same well where he will collapse at the end of chapter five, and by placing it between the occurrence in the elevator and the decision to leave, by explaining Aschenbach's desire to leave only in terms of the weather and his physical defeat, Mann is able to evoke the ambiguous duplicity of two of the novella's Dionysian forces, the plague and Tadzio.

One of the most readily visual sequences in Der Tod in Venedig is that of Aschenbach's crossing from the steamer that has brought him from Pola to the Lido. Without any sexual colouring Visconti
has successfully transcribed this scene in suitable grey, dismal
tones and suspenseful uncanniness. The shots of the gondola with
the trunk perched obliquely on the prow which seem to evoke
Boecklin's *Isle of the Dead* are particularly striking. The gondolier
has just the right amount of sullenness and menacing insistence to
suggest the demonic in his make-up. Visconti's secondary characters
are all very well drawn, and the skill with which Mann's third
principal demonic guide, the balladier, is drawn, makes one wish
Visconti had seen his way to film the opening Munich scene and
the first demonic guide.

One character who's ambit, much like the hotel manager's,
is greatly enlarged, is the mother. If anything reveals Visconti's
attitude towards the bourgeoisie it is the loving manner in which
he has brought the figure of Tadzio's mother into the foreground as
an embodiment of bourgeois attainments and culture: "As she walks
through the film, her words are inaudible, incomprehensible and
thoroughly perfect. She is the glory of her class, a living example
of privilege." 47 Visconti's position with regard to the bourgeoisie
as indicated by his depiction of the figure of the mother and the
other hotel guests, is far from suggesting Mann's ambiguously
critical position. Even Visconti's criticism of Aschenbach is directed
at Aschenbach the artist, not Aschenbach the bourgeois. The
critical approach to the middle class evinced by his earlier films
is largely lacking. What is very much in evidence here is the
tendency towards a lyric self-indulgence expressed in the nostalgic
celebration of a bygone era of elegance and beauty.

The important role Visconti assigns to the beautiful is signalled in a recorded interview where he quotes the opening couplet from Platen's Tristan from the Sonette aus Venedig:

Chi ha contemplato coi propri occhi
la bellezza è già consacrato alla morte.

(Wer die Schönheit angeschaut mit Augen,
Ist dem Tode schon anheimgegeben,)

He concludes, referring to these lines: "Io vorrei anzi che questa fosse la 'frase di lancio' del film, proprio perché in essa si racchiude il suo senso maggiore." Where Mann makes a philosophic discourse "den Kern des Ganzen", Visconti finds in Platen's lines a focal point which seems readily adaptable to cinematic reality. But does one really get the impression that Aschenbach is condemned from the moment he first sets eyes on Tadzio? And how can Tadzio represent Beauty?

He cannot be simply the imagined perfection envisaged by Aschenbach since the inner world of Aschenbach has not been disclosed: Tadzio, in the flesh, is a vulnerable creation. Mann's Aschenbach needed only to state perfection -- the rest was up to the reader's imagination. In the film, Tadzio must represent a singular perfection for a multiplicity of interpretations -- a hopeless undertaking: however beautiful the actor, he must remain flesh and reverse the Platonic direction, substituting for a universal ideal a questionable particularization. It is this unfortunate density of the flesh which, combined with the equally physical definition of Aschenbach, gives Visconti's motion-picture too much of a mundane and sexual quality.

The only element of Visconti's "frase di lancio" that is really conveyed is the
readily visual, the repetitious "contemplato coi propri occhi."

The final scene of the film rounds out Visconti's characterization of Aschenbach. Although the scene was originally planned with the off-camera voice of Aschenbach addressing Socrates' lines to Tadzio, in its final form it relies on the Adagietto alone to provide the sound track. The change is indicative of the direction of Visconti's thought on Der Tod in Venedig. At this point in the film philosophic revelations would strike an odd note, due to their tenuous connection with what has gone before. But Mahler's lyrical music is in keeping with the tone of the movie as a whole, and in keeping with the melodramatic, grandiose gesture Visconti desires for his ending. Visconti almost overwhelms Aschenbach with the strains of Mahler's "Liebestod" and the vast spaces of the deserted Lido. He almost effaces him in the resurgence of setting and music. Having reduced his protagonist to a helpless spectator, Visconti deals him the coup de grâce by having his corpse lugged unceremoniously across the screen. In death as in life Aschenbach is treated by Visconti with disrespect, indeed, with misunderstanding and a certain defensive detachment.
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3. Ibid. p. 269
4. Ibid. p. 249
5. cf. Ibid. pp. 85-6
6. Ibid. p. 117
7. Mann, Thomas. Doktor Faustus. p. 206
8. Micciche, L. op. cit. p. 86
9. Ibid. p. 258
10. Ibid. p. 257
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14. Ibid. p. 118
15. Ibid. p. 118
16. Loc. cit.
17. Mann, Thomas. Der Tod in Venedig. p. 453
18. Ibid. p. 449
19. Ibid. p. 448
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25. Braverman & Nachman. op. cit. p. 297


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34. Loc. cit.

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36. Ibid. p. 494 (underlining mine)

37. Ibid. p. 456

38. Ibid. p. 509

39. Ibid. p. 499

40. Ibid. p. 489

41. Ibid. p. 521

42. Steiner, George. Encounter. 33, No. 2, Aug. 1969, p. 9

43. Mann, Thomas. Der Tod in Venedig. p. 481

44. Miccichè, L. op. cit. p. 122

45. Ibid. p. 119

47. Mellen, Joan. *op. cit.* p. 42

48. Micciche, L. *op. cit.* p. 117


50. Micciche, L. *op. cit.* p. 234
In approaching *Morte a Venezia* one must ask oneself to what extent one is justified in criticizing it in terms of *Der Tod in Venedig*, and how much value one can attach to a consideration of the film as a work of art sufficient unto itself and not dependant on *Der Tod in Venedig* for its aesthetic existence.

This problem of Visconti's indebtedness to Mann is well broached in a review appearing in *Film Quarterly*:

film-makers are under no aesthetic obligation to respect their sources merely for the sources' sake; indeed, departure from the source is precisely part of the challenge of adaptation, and it is always necessary, of course, in the drastic compression through which a novel must pass to reach screen length. ... But in any case comparisons are inevitable, since the way in which the original (or at least penultimate) author framed and solved the problems of the work cannot help but be of interest as we examine how the adapter attempted to frame and solve them.

However, when a film-maker chooses to call his work by the title of the original, it is always part of the critic's task to compare the spirit and the letter of the adaptation with the original. Pinter and Losey calling their film *The Go-Between* is an assertion that they are capturing visually the psychological nuances of L.P. Hartley's novel by the same name. The degree of their success, however, great or small, is to some extent a comment on the significance of the original as well as a measure of how well they have achieved a self-assigned aesthetic task. By calling his film *Death in Venice*, Visconti asks us to discover Thomas Mann's story within the texture of his film, as Kurosawa, with more humility, does not ask us to do when he gives his version of *Macbeth* the title *Throne of Blood.*

A study of *Morte a Venezia* which does not take its sources
into account seems to do the film more harm than good. One might go so far as to say that deprived of its auteur (i.e. of Visconti considered as auteur) and of Mann, the film could not stand alone. It gains strength when viewed within the context of Visconti's filmography, and in consideration of the success with which it expresses Mann's novella visually. The film gains inestimably from the difficulty which a viewer who has read the novella has in trying to block out the novella and let the visuals speak for themselves. For one who has read the novella beforehand, the tendency to read into the film corroborating ideas and nuances which are not there, is irresistible. At the same time, however, the film suffers a loss, a loss of intellectuality, ambiguity, and the sense of tragedy, as those who have previously read the novella search for the story "dal racconto di Thomas Mann" which they have a right to expect.

It is not just by the title of his film that Visconti invites comparison with Mann's novella. Visconti uses allusion and quotation in a manner reminiscent of Mann in Doktor Faustus; the references are meant to be identified to one extent or another. In Morte a Venezia Visconti is as much the metteur en scène of Der Tod in Venedig as he is the independent auteur using his source material as "a pretext, which provides catalysts, scenes which fuse with his own preoccupations to produce a radically new work."² Visconti wants to be compared with Mann and with Mahler as "the last exponent
of an exhausted art form" — a form represented, for him, by his own concept of film as the narration of a refined and aesthetic lyric adventure. Visconti courts decadence, and filming Der Tod in Venedig is one way of objectifying and sublimating this decadent view of art. The choice of Der Tod in Venedig complements Visconti's position as one who is conscious of decadence in his work, much the way Mann, conscious of a growing sense of lack of direction and purpose in his narrative prose around 1910, chose to write Der Tod in Venedig. It gives Visconti the opportunity to identify with authors who capture the decadent spirit of la belle époque in language and music, and the opportunity to identify reluctantly with a character who is allowed one last fling before he, his art, and his world disappear. Visconti is aware that his style of film-making has reached an impasse, that it is no longer capable of expressing the problems which were a central feature of his earlier films. He knows, but does not act in the light of that knowledge. He has turned inward, indifferent to current ideas and trends in cinema, indulging his taste for stories of defeat and grandiloquence, for beauty in sets and costumes, to the point where one critic qualifies Morte a Venezia as "a masterpiece of disregard for everything but the imperious, the beautiful, the symbolic, the cultivated."3

Visconti's choice of Der Tod in Venedig for a film is decidedly overly ambitious. Mann's novella is not wholly satisfying when presented primarily as melodrama. The text is one which complicates the search for the surfaces which a film-maker needs. Aschenbach's world in the mind makes it extremely difficult to locate in him "the irreducible core of raw, unquestioned reality that is the first
The assumption that complex emotions and subtle ideas, which can be expressed adequately only in language, can be rendered in moving photographs. ... The one thing a film cannot do is express complex ideas or meanings; and forcing it to do so puts a brake on movement (which is the very essence of the movies) slowing it down to a complete stop in order to suggest a significance that goes beyond the image. ...

The cinema derives its power from its ability to arouse an emotional reaction that is both immediate and certain. Whereas a poem or a novel cannot come alive without the reader's elaboration; its power of suggestion is a construction of his mind, calling into play his sensibility, and his intellectual and imaginative faculties.7

Visconti's cinematic interpretation of Der Tod in Venedig is all structure, all skeleton, compounded by an ambiguity and intellectual pretention which tend to drag and obscure. No single image, no external rallying point, be it object or character, is presented in a way which could provide the film with a reality capable of carrying the intellectual and aesthetic burden. "Milieu is made an easy substitute for analysis, melodrama ... for a sustained metaphor which would illuminate the contradictions inherent in the character of a man who would live simultaneously as bourgeois and artist."8 Aschenbach seems unable to provide the picture with motion, with a central life force. He does not partake enough of reality, of cinematic reality, in order to be really effective.
By deleting the opening Munich scene, i.e. a pre-Venice image of Aschenbach, and by reducing the instances of Aschenbach's lucidity and ironic self-commentary to the one, albeit very telling scene in which he collapses at the well and turns upon himself the laughter which was directed at him in the hotel elevator by Tadzio and his young friends and on the hotel veranda by the balladiers -- by curtailing such scenes Aschenbach's character is made rather flat and one-dimensional. Visconti has not taken advantage of the pivotal Socrates/Phaedrus discourse, and the discussion of the bourgeois artist it contains, in order to endow Aschenbach with filmic presence.

The images of his film tend to be ungrounded in a central understanding of who Aschenbach was and how his defeat was a historical as well as a personal event. ... Visconti, half-admiring the facade, never notices the substance -- the tragedy of a man who could devote his life to proving himself and his class worthy of an unchallengeable social and moral status. ... Visconti's adaptation of Death in Venice should remind us, not of the impossibility of adapting great literature to film, but of the danger to the film-maker who would translate into his medium the work of an artist whose ideas he has not mastered as his own.  

A great work of literature does not necessarily make for a great film. Visconti's adaptation of Der Tod in Venedig fails to do justice to the novella. His "selection of the essential" is too greatly coloured by personal idiosyncracy to express the novella effectively, given that it can be adequately rendered through the medium of film. His choice of Der Tod in Venedig is motivated by the desire to partake of an historical epoch of decay and refinement, by the need for artistic asylum. "It is film as hobby, or ornament,
but not as expression."^{10} Visconti has become an aesthetician first, a film-maker second.
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